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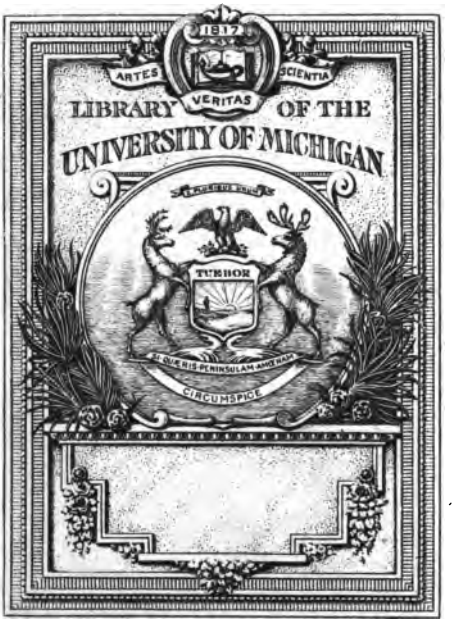
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Hook, James

PERCY MALLORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF PEN OWEN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BESEECH YOU, SIR, WERE YOU PRESENT AT THIS RELATION?
I WAS BY, AT THE OPENING OF THE FARDEL.

WINTER'S TALE.

VOL. III.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH:
AND T. CADELL, LONDON.
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PERCY MALLORY.

CHAPTER I.

At the conclusion of our last volume, we left Mr Clement Dossiter at the outer-door of Percy's chambers—where, of course, he only remained until the latter had answered his summons, when he was admitted into the *sanctum*—or, as it is called, *par excellence*, "the study," whatever may be the nature of the pursuits therein carried on.

It must be confessed, Percy considered that gentleman a very unseasonable visitor. He had not been able to make up his mind to the manner and deportment necessary to be adopted in his future intercourse with the firm in Chancery Lane. There was no injunction of secrecy on

the part of De Lacy in making his communications respecting the persons composing it, and he had pretty freely hinted to the younger partner that he meant to have no reserves with his friend Percy. Still there was a degree of implied confidence—or, at least, an informality in the mode of reposing it, which did not appear to warrant a rude breach with these persons—until the sanction and authority of Mr Rycott, after all particulars were made known to him, should warrant so decided a measure.

He therefore received the worthy attorney with a polite but reserved air—and appeared solicitous to avoid anything but general topics, or such as immediately related to his own professional pursuits.

He might just as well have spoken plainly out—for his visitor was as much *au fait* to the operations of his mind, as if they had been vented in the most distinct and appropriate language. His eye had immediately caught the card of Grandison de Lacy, as it lay, where he had thrown it upon the table—nor did the address to Mr Rycott of Wolston Worthy escape his penetrating

eye, which, in a moment, could habitually take in all that was necessary for the passing occasion, whilst it seemed to roll, if not in vacancy, in perfect indifference towards all that was passing around him.

"I am sorry to find ——" at length he observed, having previously looked towards the bed-chamber door, which stood a little a-jar, and being drily informed in return by Percy, that "there was no one there."

"I am sorry to find—that my son Clarendon—who—who, my good Sir—between ourselves, is, like too many young men, led away by the seductions of the town ——"

"I entreat, Sir——" said Percy, who wished to avoid the subject.

"Enough—enough—it cannot be interesting to you to listen to the misfortunes of a parent."

"Misfortunes! Mr Dossiter!"

"Even so, my good young friend—you have no notion of my afflictions—the boy was all that I could wish him—docile, simple, and steady to his desk, until his unfortunate connection with my Lord Brandon ——"

" I thought, Sir," began Percy, who could not endure that this man should suppose him to be his dupe—

" I thought, Sir, that ——"

" Enough,—enough—I know you did.—People will talk—but no man sees into the heart."

Percy gave an assenting nod—and the lawyer proceeded.—" Lord Brandon, Sir,"—assuming a very grave and sententious tone, added to all his habitual caution—" is a very vicious, unprincipled young man."

" So I have heard, Sir."

" No doubt,"—and he paused—" but he contrived to fascinate my poor boy."

" Is uncloaked vice so very fascinating, Mr Dossiter?"

" To a young inexperienced mind."

" His Lordship is your son's junior."

" Who told you so?" demanded the worthy lawyer in a quicker tone, as if thrown for a moment off his guard.

" Those who appear to be well acquainted with both parties—and ——"

" Enough—enough—I perceive you are unac-

quainted with the impositions of this great town—every man is playing a part."

"So I am informed, Mr Dossiter," observed Percy, drily.

"But you lack the experience to read such persons in their true colours."

"I have had the book opened to me."

"Mr Grandison de Lacy, my good Sir, has conceived some very unfounded prejudice against my son—I—I—mark me, Mr Percy—don't defend the boy—I was speaking of my griefs at the dissipated courses into which he has of late been too fatally seduced—but, it is I—not Mr De Lacy—who am the sufferer, and he might spare the feelings of a father."

"I have not named Mr De Lacy, Sir."

"But, from him you must have had your information."

"He could have no motive."

"He is your only informant."

"I neither admit nor deny it—but ——"

"Enough—enough, Mr Percy—but I cannot blame you for your resolution to avoid the society of my son in future."

"I have communicated no such resolution, Sir—you must infer it from ——"

"Enough—enough, Mr Percy—I do not even desire it—but I trust, and hope, my misfortune will not be misconstrued into a crime—and that I shall not forfeit your good opinion."

"My opinion, Mr Dossiter, must ever be a matter of very great indifference to you."

"Far, very far from it, my good young friend, if you will still permit me to call you so."

"Friendship, Mr Dossiter, is a plant that requires time for its growth."

"Beautifully expressed—and not more pithy than true," and Dossiter could not conceal a certain irony of expression, which flushed even the natural high colouring of his visage—"but it will be my study to convince you I am worthy of your confidence."

"I have no confidence to bestow, Mr Dossiter—you know me for what I am—and my sole object is, to avail myself of the means I possess, to raise myself to the rank from which I have fallen."

"There are reserves, Mr Percy—which the most candid ——"

"I have none, Sir,"—cried Percy, rising.

"Not even Miss Loo Bellenden!"

"What of her, Sir?" demanded Percy, turning again round to face his companion—"how know you any thing concerning that lady—and what mean you by associating my name with hers?"

"I only named the lady, as connected with your reserves,"—and there was an expression in the lawyer's countenance, in which a quick observer might have read—"I have still a hold upon thee."

"If you know any thing, Mr Dossiter, concerning Miss Bellenden ——"

"I know much—all—every thing!"—and an air of triumph visibly spread itself over his features.

"Psha—what should you know—but from the communications of Mr Rycott?" cried Percy, again turning away to stir the fire.

"From Mr Rycott, I solemnly assure you, Sir, I have never heard her name."

"Where, then, have you gained your information, Sir?" as the poker dropt from his hands.

"That—Mr Percy—I am not at liberty to divulge. The confidences reposed in a professional man are sacred—you have admitted my information to be correct—and here the conversation must close upon the subject—at least, for the present."

"Shall you be at liberty ——"

"Enough—enough, Mr Percy—walls have ears—I never commit myself—the time *may* come—but further, the deponent sayeth not,"—and the cautious lawyer, for the first time, smiled. He had drawn his patient off from the scent—he had tacitly agreed to the sacrifice of his son—but he had clutched his victim, as he hoped, the more securely in his own grasp. He laughed internally, at having a lover to deal with, as well as a novice—being somewhat suspicious of his aptitude to his purpose, in the unmixed character of the latter.

"We have fallen into a strange, discursive conversation," he calmly observed; "for my sole and exclusive object in paying my respects to

you this morning was—to convey a message from my worthy and excellent friend, the Earl of Harweden, requesting you to meet him at dinner, at my house to-morrow."

"Our former meeting, Sir, did not appear to have been more desired by his Lordship than yourself, and I should ——"

"Enough—enough, I know what you would say—but he didn't then know you and I—but—between ourselves,"—and he looked cautiously around the apartment,—"it is just as well, you should not meet him again—he is—though my friend—he is whimsical and somewhat capricious."

"I confess," observed Percy, with a pointed tone of expression, "that I have no very earnest desire to cultivate an intimacy with the father of Lord Brandon."

"Enough—enough—you are quite right—where parents are negligent—or over indulgent —no matter—I approve your declining these advances of the old Earl—I—I ——"

"Indeed!—you are not then ——"

"A faithful ambassador—I know you would say; but I have a twofold duty to perform—to

satisfy my employer—and to watch over the interests of my friend."

"Lord Harweden is, I presume, both your employer and your friend," returned Percy, with some dryness.

"Enough—enough—his Lordship for his amusement wishes for your society—you will gain what is more conducive to your present object, in improving your information."

"I am engaged to-morrow to my friend, Grandison de Lacy."

"Humph!—perhaps you could make your excuses to him—he is not living *en famille*—you might plead a prior ——"

"I never condescend to a falsehood, and if——"

"Enough—I know you."

"You do not know me, Sir," replied he, smiling contemptuously—"for you will not hear me—I am engaged to Mr De Lacy, but not absolutely to dinner—although I calculate the probability of ——"

"Then you may be off, without a ——"

"I have no intention of being off, as you call it, Mr Dossiter—besides, you even now approved of my declining ——"

" Enough—enough—but I had my reasons."

" And I mine, Mr Dossiter."

And the parties separated—whether with improved opinions of each other, or not—we must leave to the sagacity of our readers to decide.

Percy kept his appointment with De Lacy on the succeeding day, and accompanied him to Lady Sarah Henessey's in Seymour Place, where he was most politely received by her Ladyship as a friend of her nephew's—and by Gertrude de Lacy as a friend of her own.

Lady Sarah was a woman of a highly cultivated mind—and of equally cultivated manners—dignified without formality—affable, without the affectation of condescending to be so—humane without ostentation—charitable, without constantly advertising her bounties—liberal, without compromising her principles—and severe only when Vice or Folly attempted to usurp a station to which they were not entitled. Miss De Lacy had already thrown off some of the formality of her previous education in the short period of her domestication with her Ladyship; and the glow of pleasure which lighted up her beautiful counte-

nance when Percy made his appearance in Lady Sarah's boudoir, could not be mistaken by one who jealously watched every look of those who, remembering him in prosperity, first encountered him in his fallen fortunes.

Much pleasant and interesting conversation, or rather that sort of chit-chat or gossip, which is a sort of universal language among those who meet for the first time—or for the first time after a long separation—took place; but as inquiries of the country cousins on the one hand—or of marriages *in petto* or in progress in high-life, on the other, lose much of their flavour and *gusto* by change of place and circumstances, we shall transfer to our polite readers the task of filling up the blank, which, for their sakes, as well as our own, we hereby leave for that purpose.

For several weeks Percy passed almost all his leisure time with the ladies in Seymour Place—joined their little select parties at dinner, or in the evening—and began to acknowledge, even to himself, that he was not—in technical language—"making the most of his time." As the power of ubiquity is not given to man—it may safely be in-

ferred, that the more leisure he was able to bestow upon these parties, the less remained for him to devote to the Dossiters, and here his conscience formed a palliative in the conviction—every day more firmly fixed in his mind by repeated communications from De Lacy—that the less he saw of his worthy *consignee*, or his family, the better.

Percy, however, had been somewhat startled and surprised by an answer to the letter he had written to Mr Rycott—in which none of the intemperate sallies of that gentleman were displayed—but which, on the contrary, contained the very sober counsel to Percy, to avoid any rupture with Mr Clement Dossiter—to continue to consult him, when necessary, upon points of business—and to shew no symptoms of suspicion in his intercourse with the family.

This was strange—passing strange—but a letter of a very different character having been brought to him by the same post, it must be acknowledged that he did not bestow so much time and attention upon the developement of the mystery, as might have led even to a probable inference respecting Mr Rycott's motives.

Loo Bellenden had honorably acquitted him upon his breach of covenant, but only upon condition that the offence should not be repeated. She wrote in the warmest and most affectionate terms that were consistent with her sense of propriety, and the necessary restraint she wished to impose upon Percy's more ardent imagination. What she said was also comprised in a comparatively small compass—but this evil found a remedy in the ingenuity of her correspondent, who read it over at least ten times, before he was fully satisfied that she felt more than she had allowed herself to express.

On the day on which he drew this prize, he could not prevail upon himself to enter upon the drudgery of his office—so leaving the Special Pleader for a future lecture upon his neglect—he strolled into the Temple garden, in order to give the more free vent to the various feelings which occupied his soul, and seemed ready to choke and suffocate him within the narrow limits of his chambers.

The expedient failed after a few turns near the banks of the Thames—especially as, in the midst

of a rhapsody, to which he had unwittingly given action and utterance, he was assailed by two sets of watermen from the river, who had mistaken a certain elevation of the arm for a summons, and shouted out in rival contention for the honor of his conveyance—"Oars"—"Sculls"—"Oars, your Honor"—whilst he, thus rudely awakened from his dreams of bliss, motioned them indignantly away. But the evil did not end here—for, in turning his back upon these naval intruders, he caught several peering heads, and eyes and eye-glasses, and parts, portion of bodies enveloped in dressing-gowns, from the surrounding windows, directed earnestly towards the walk he was pacing—and evidently attracted by no object but himself.

"What an idle life is that of a Templar!" he almost exclaimed—as he peevishly turned into his door—and he determined upon an indulgence, of which he had availed himself more than once, for the relief of an overburthened mind. If his purpose was not very favourable to his pretensions as a man of gallantry—it was a proof at least of the high notions he entertained of friendship.

Our readers cannot have forgotten, that the only consideration which reconciled Percy to the sentence of expatriation to Lacy Royal, so suddenly passed upon him by Mr Rycott—was the opportunity he should possess of opening his heart, and unburthening himself of his feelings —then recently awakened towards Loo Bellenden —to the veteran partner and confidante of all his boyish grievances, Miss Gertrude De Lacy.

He had scarcely been alone with this young lady five minutes, after his first introduction in London, before he opened the interesting topic, and informed her of every thing that had passed, from the first interview with the idol of his affection—up to the existing state of the connection between them.

It is true she did not at first appear to enter so warmly into the affair as Percy had expected. He had often seen her more interested in his avoiding the penalty for robbing an orchard or a bird's nest—but then she was yet a stranger to love, and could not perhaps understand or appreciate his feelings. She blushed—and was agitated—perhaps it was indelicate to make even an old

play-fellow the confidante of a love tale. He began to apologise, and to explain—but in proportion as he appeared to recede, the young lady advanced, and having collected herself for the purpose of listening to all he had farther to communicate, she not only became deeply interested, but even shed tears of sympathy as Percy rose in the energy of his expressions!

What a resource to a lover banished to the distance of several hundred miles from his mistress! Percy did not reflect upon the motives of Loo Bellenden for forbidding a correspondence between them. In talking of her he thought only of her perfections, and her scrupulous injunction on this head savoured, in his opinion, more of prudery than was consistent with the general unreservedness of her character. To this shade, therefore, he never referred in his *tête-à-tête* confidences with Gertrude de Lacy—and, consequently, it was impossible he should have any opportunity of analyzing the subject with a too nice discrimination—and equally evident that the greater part of his time, instead of being devoted to business, was dissipated in visions of fancy, which his mis-

tress had been at so much pains to keep out of his view.

To Seymour Place he now flew to communicate the letter he had just received, and to share all the feelings, which he felt too mighty to be pent up within the narrow compass of his own bosom, with his fair confidante. Guess, gentle reader, then, his horror at being told, that Miss De Lacy was too much indisposed to receive company—and was actually confined to her chamber. He inquired for Lady Sarah—but she was in attendance upon her friend.

Percy turned from the door in a state of utter despondency—he tenderly loved Gertrude as a sister, but concluding she was suffering from some temporary indisposition, he regretted her confinement only as it excluded him from a source of comfort, upon which he had calculated, without admitting a chance of disappointment. She had, indeed, on the previous evening, left him somewhat abruptly, in the midst of a most edifying eulogy upon the energies of Loo Bellenden's mind—complaining of a sudden giddiness in her head, and expressing an apprehension that she should not

be able to return to the drawing-room again that evening.

"We can finish to-morrow," said Percy, affectionately pressing her hand.

"Perhaps"—and she made a hasty retreat without noticing Lady Sarah, who was in conversation with a few friends in another part of the room.

"A cursed place for catching colds, this London," ejaculated Percy, as he turned into South Audley Street.

"Do you cut me, Percy?" cried Grandison De Lacy, as he had passed him without observation.

"Grandison!—I was ——"

"Lost to the world, I presume," added De Lacy. "Have you been at Lady Sarah's?"

"This moment left the door."

"Have you seen Gertrude?"

"She is invisible."

"Poor girl—I have had a strange note from Lady Sarah this morning about her—she makes her out seriously ill."

"Good Heavens!"

"And that Dr Baillie is puzzled about her."

"I thought it was a mere cold."

"It may be—but ladies magnify these things."

"But Dr Baillie ——"

"It is only his report, second-hand—but I must judge for myself.—Where do you dine?"

It was settled that the two young men should dine together—and, at the appointed time, Percy met his friend, divested of all his airs of coxcombry—and apparently absorbed in feelings of interest for his sister. The physician could find no immediate symptoms of disease—yet her whole system was deranged, and there were indications of approaching fever, the nature of which could not be defined. Percy truly sympathized in the feelings of his friend—next to Loo Bellenden, there was not a being to whom he was more devotedly attached than to Gertrude De Lacy.

The meal passed away without any of the vivacity, which usually marked the conversation of De Lacy, and Percy did not rally—or reproach him for his dulness.—It was altogether unlike any interview which had ever taken place between them—and the little that was said, related rather

to past times, than to what was immediately before them.

Several days passed in this state of suspense and anxiety.—Expresses had been sent off to Lacy Royal, on the second day of Gertrude's attack, and Sir Hugh and Lady Rodolpha might be hourly expected—when De Lacy, after a very affecting interview with Lady Sarah, took Percy's arm, and hurried him into the Park.

"Percy—this is altogether a most unaccountable business."

"Grievous, indeed!"

"The physicians are all of one opinion—that it is mind working upon the constitution—that either grief or love ——"

"How can that possibly be?"

"That is the query—by Heavens!—no, no—you, Percy, have never given her reason!"

"Me, my dear Grandison!"

"No, no—it is out of the question—there was a time ——"

"Never, Grandison!"

"I mean—when it might have been—but no ——"

"As a sister, you know, De Lacy, how near she is to my heart."

"Yes, Percy," (with a faint smile,) "but brotherly affections, without the tie of consanguinity, are a slight barrier against ——"

"There are others which are insuperable."

"Which may have subsequently been interposed—but no—it is out of the question."

"Absolutely"—and the conversation died a natural death, as they shook hands and parted at Hyde Park Corner—De Lacy to return to his post to await the arrival of his parents—the other to shut himself up in the solitude of his chambers.

Now, had Percy been a coxcomb—or even educated within the precincts of St James's, it is just possible he might, in addition to the loose hints thrown out by De Lacy, have contributed certain predilections in favour of his own personal qualifications, sufficient to warrant the possibility, at least, of a girl, who had passed a large portion of her life with him—and for some period of it, been taught to consider him in the light of a future husband—dying for love of him! But such a thought never crossed his imagination. The slight an-

swers returned to the observations of his friend in the Park were referable to himself alone—and he would have considered an inference of such a nature—even under more auspicious circumstances—as wild and chimerical, as would Sir Hugh De Lacy himself, under the changes which had taken place in the fortunes of Percy Mallory.

Several days more passed on—without any material change in the situation of the sufferer.

Percy was rather surprised at having his inquiries answered by Lady Sarah's porter, when he called to make his inquiries one morning, after the arrival of Sir Hugh and Lady Rodolpha—instead of being shewn, as usual, into her Ladyship's boudoir, or drawing-room. But he thought no more of it, after the first impression—until a repetition of the ceremony, on the following day, recalled his attention to the singularity of the proceeding.

The unpleasant reflections to which this circumstance gave rise in the breast of Percy were not alleviated, by receiving several notes, which might rather be termed "bulletins," on the state of Miss De Lacy's health, instead of the friendly

calls of De Lacy, whenever he had any thing to communicate. He saw him no more at his chambers, and was actually excluded from him in Seymour Place, whilst the notes became shorter—then less frequent—and at length ceased altogether. This was no time for resenting a personal slight—or for obtruding any feelings of a personal nature upon his friend—but Percy felt wounded by the evident neglect, although he threw into the opposite scale as much as could be possibly allowed, for the natural absorption of all the interests and feelings of the family, in the melancholy situation of the fairest, and most estimable member of it.

Ruminating upon the subject one morning, as he was proceeding to make his still daily inquiry at the door of Lady Sarah, he was surprised, on looking towards the house, to observe that the windows were closed. His heart beat violently, and scarcely knowing what he did, or what he felt, he knocked at the door. His summons remained unanswered.—He knocked again, with something like the energy of despair.—An old woman appeared—and to his incoherent questions,

which became so, from the fear and apprehension of some heart-wounding information given too directly, or bluntly, by the sort of person before him, he collected that the whole family had left town by daybreak, for the North.

"And Miss De Lacy?"—stammered Percy.

"The young lady as was sick?"

"Is she—how is she ——"

"La me—if I hadn't almost forgot—pray, is your name Marry—or Marrowbone?"

"Yes—what then ——"

"Oh, nothing—only the young gentleman bid me say, if you called, as the young lady was much better, only they was all obliged to leave Lunnun, on other business."

"And was she better?"

"Bless you, Sir—I suppose so, as I was ordered to say so."

Percy darted down the steps—and was again lost in his reflections—and bewildered in his conjectures concerning the motives which could have led to so sudden a determination, and lost, for some time, all sense of the neglect, and almost contemptuous conduct of the family towards him-

self, in the interest he felt for the several individuals composing it.

The reader, probably, will not be so much at a loss to account for these proceedings, and, it must be confessed, that, in the solitude of his chamber, Percy—diffident as he really was, and indisposed as he also was to admit any thing like the truth to approach his imagination—could not altogether help glancing at the probable causes of so extraordinary—and apparently desperate—a mode of proceeding.

His mind was ill at ease under even a vague apprehension of being the cause of so much evil, and there were periods of self-examination, as he feverishly paced the room, when he could not fail to tax himself with indiscretion. A seasonable fit of modesty would then come to his aid, and the utter impossibility of the affections of one woman being gained by the outpourings of the heart in favour of another, soothed him again into complacency. Still poor Gertrude was ill—the account of her improved health, in the course of four-and-twenty hours from his previous inquiry, appeared to have been specifically left for

some purpose of delusion, and the total absence of all explanation from his good-natured, though coxcombical friend, Grandison, convinced him, that he must appear, in some sort, a delinquent in the eyes and opinion of the family.

CHAPTER II.

PERCY'S situation, it must be admitted, was one not only of pain, but difficulty.—He could neither presume upon the inferences—even had he been disposed to draw them closer—in favour of his having unwittingly inspired the young lady with a passion for him—nor could he, at the risk even of all his airy dreams of happiness with one woman, offer himself with the self-devotion of a victim at the shrine of another. His want of rank—of fortune—his known history, would only subject him to insult, were he at full liberty to throw himself at her feet. These were only transient thoughts—they were dismissed, and others attempted to be substituted in their stead, which were as chimerical as those which had given place to them. The Temple clock had told the hour

of one—his fire was out—he was chilled—wretched—and yet without energy sufficient to change his position, for the purpose of going to bed. Suddenly he was started by a loud summons at his outer door. He rose, and demanded who was there; and was answered in the well-known tones of his friend Blencow, whom he had scarcely seen for some weeks past. There is a melody and a charm about the voice of a friend—humble though he be—which sweeps across the soul with tenfold effect, when it is unstrung by misfortune, or overstrained by anxiety. He pulled back the lock with alacrity, and welcomed his friend, with some gentle and affectionate reproaches for the rareness of his visits—" though," he added smiling, " this is rather an unseasonable hour for a ceremony so rarely performed."

" Ah, Percy !" replied the other, as his looks bespoke dismay, and even horror—" Why did I ever lose sight of you—why did I ever leave you ?"

" Why !—what, in Heaven, is the matter with you ?" cried Percy starting back, as he looked upon his features.

"I cannot speak—stop, Con—a moment—let me gasp for a little breath—I have run the whole way."

"Where from?—but stop—I will give you some wine."

"No—no—no wine—I have had too much of wine, and—all—all that it leads to."

"Be calm—sit down—Blen—something is wrong—take your time—I will see you righted."

"Then you will see me hanged, Percy—for" and he could utter no more. After a considerable pause, in which Percy's curiosity no less than his anxiety, was most forcibly awakened, Blencow proceeded to his confessions, which went to shew, that he had fallen into "most villainous company" in his official associates at Mr Clement Dossiter's—that, by degrees, he had been led on from a half play and an oyster—to the low carousal of tavern junketings—and, finally, into excesses which generally ensue from such beginnings—that he dreaded seeking counsel from Percy, because it must involve a confession of his misconduct—and that the slight manner in which his irregular conduct was treated at home, and the ridi-

cule he encountered for his scruples from his companions, had, night after night, smothered his good resolutions, until, at length, he found himself involved in debts he could not pay, and had been dragged rather than drawn into the vortex of a low gambling establishment, in which he now found the principal clerk of Mr Dossiter's office was a leagued partner with another man, who had been his chief decoy into the society.

"Still, my good Blencow, you should have applied to me."

"I repeat I did not dare—nor should I now, perhaps, have had courage to do it—but that an event ——" and he faltered.

"What event?—speak out, Blencow—you cannot yet have been criminal;"—and he started as he spoke at the sound of suspicion conveyed in his own words.

"I trust and hope not—but I have witnessed such a scene as ——"

"What is it?—speak."

"You must take me in my own way, Con—you know I was never able to tell my own story."

"Out with it, then, in your own way."

But it was in his own way—and that so round-about a way, that the reader will be glad of a *precis* writer on the occasion—at least where the interlocutor is not necessarily called upon the scene to give verbal evidence.

"The long and the short of it," as Blencow constantly prefaced what he had to say, was, that, on this evening, he had gone, as had been the case for several previous nights, to a house in the neighbourhood of St James's, where all comers were admitted who desired to risk or amass money, under the joint establishment of one Jarvis, who lived in the adjoining house, and Driblet, the head clerk of Dossiter. It appeared, that Lord Brandon, unable to raise sums sufficient to adventure with his associates in the more select clubs with which our accommodating metropolis abounds—had descended to join that mixed description of persons who are to be met with in this lowest order of gaming-houses—that some notorious black-legs, who had made a dead set at this promising scion of nobility, having been baffled by him—through the very means which they

had planned to entrap him—had resented his conduct in terms of the bitterest invective—which he, more than half intoxicated, retorted by a display of his pugilistic powers—that, being in the minority, and having united in a common cause against him all who had been thus excluded from the "nice pickings" about a young lord, a general affray had taken place, in which Blencow and his associates had been considerably mauled as the allies of his Lordship—and the unfortunate lord himself very desperately wounded.

It appeared, that this battle-royal within had spread the alarm of murder beyond the walls—and that the emissaries of justice having broken open the doors, Blencow, as an assistant to his friends, Driblet and Jarvis, had succeeded in conveying the wounded nobleman through a secret communication which united Jarvis's house and the other through the cellars, so as, for a time, to escape the vigilance of the police, who were occupied in securing the persons of their less alert, or less initiated, associates above. Whilst those most interested in saving the life of Lord Bran-

don—namely, the managers of the general concern, and consequently the responsible persons, should the affair terminate fatally—were binding up his wounds, and preparing to place him, whilst in a state of insensibility, in a bed, hastily prepared for him, poor Blencow began to perceive all the probable consequences of his first deviation from a steady and honorable line of conduct. He lamented the day he had ever entered the service of Dossiter, and came to a thousand wise resolutions of amendment, now that he was "better acquainted with the world," should he be able to extricate himself from his present embarrassments. The first actual step towards this was to come to an open confession with his oldest, and, indeed, only friend, Percy, and he was in the act of advancing towards the door, without considering the dangers by which he was surrounded—when his ears were stricken by an exclamation from the man Jarvis—who had just completed his task of undressing the wounded nobleman—

"God in Heaven!—can it be?"—he almost shrieked, and let fall the arm, by which he was

about to lift him, with the aid of Driblet, into bed.

"What ails thee, Jarvis?" demanded the other, as he threw himself forward to give additional support to the inert mass before him—and which had nearly fallen to the floor by the sudden abstraction of Jarvis's support.

"Nothing!" was the short answer.

"Nothing!—why, what is this?" pointing to the arm of the wounded man.

"Hush! for God's sake," returned the other, as he suddenly recovered himself, and whispered—loud enough for Blencow to catch it—"It is—it is Rycott's child—here is the mark—and Dossiter ——" but what followed was lost to him, who appeared to be, for the moment, forgotten, as he stood appalled in a darkened corner of the apartment.

Blencow could not be mistaken in the words which had reached his ear—they were clear and specific, and the very name of Rycott fixed them indelibly upon his memory. He did not understand the first import of them—nor the exact consequences to which this accidental discovery might

tend—but he felt, that no time was to be lost in communicating it to his friend, Percy—and again he was about to attempt his retreat, when he was checked by the clamour of voices, as if a mob were assembled about the street door, through which he had hoped to effect his escape.

"Is that you, Blencow?" demanded Driblet, who turned from the wounded man upon hearing his retreating footstep.

"Aye," answered he—"but we are surrounded."

"No fear," interrupted Jarvis—"we will boldly let them in. They can't know us. We are only attending upon Lord Brandon, you see, whom we have rescued—but that box ——"

"That must not be seen," added Driblet with much anxiety.

"Nor this watch," said Jarvis, as he produced a very handsome one from his pocket. Blencow started. It was Percy's—the identical one, he felt assured, which had been carried off in the port-feuille, which he had entrusted to the care of his very gentlemanlike protector in his scuffle with the mob.

He was discreet enough to be silent at present upon the subject—or it might have prevented the proposition of Driblet, that Blencow should be despatched by a secret door at the back part of the premises, as the bearer of the box, which was of no great size, and some other articles, including the watch, to a place of security. Blencow did not hesitate to subscribe to any plan which included a change in his present position—and, having received a key, and certain minute directions from the head of his department, where to deposit the important charge when he should reach Chancery Lane, he was safely conducted to a door, which opened upon one of those bye courts, running at the back of St James's Street, and dismissed with repeated cautions to avoid observation.

Over-cautious people are apt to get involved in the very scrapes they are manœuvring to avoid, and so it happened in the case of poor Blencow, who, having been observed by one of the guardians of the night, sculking in order to avoid the inconvenient glare of a lamp, and hugging, with apparent affection, a small trunk, concerning

which, it was quite clear, he was very anxious—he considered him at the advanced period of the night, or rather morning, an object certainly of suspicion, and when he attempted to elude him, an unquestioned rogue of the first water. Blencow at first made some resistance—but when, by a spring of his rattle, the watchman had collected certain of his colleagues about him, he begged to be heard, and assured his detainers that he had no evil intentions, and was quietly proceeding to his home.

"Where did he come from?" This was a puzzler.—"What did the box contain?"—This was another.—"What was his calling?"

"An attorney's clerk."

"Humph!" quoth the watchman.—"What was his name?"

"Blencow!"

"Readily answered, my cool un—Bilboa would have done as well. Come—come—you must along with us. A fellow as can give no better account of himself than his name as a 'tarney's clerk, won't come to his confessions in the open air—clean straw and a cool diet will make you speak out clearer,"—and, without fur-

ther ceremony, they took possession of the box, and the person of Blencow—having duly separated the parties—and led the way, as a matter of course, to the watch-house.

Two of these nightly guardians of our persons and property were deemed sufficient to conduct our poor mountaineer to the place of durance; and as he appeared to be a "civil sort of young fellar," they passed on very amicably, until they were about to turn the corner into St Martin's Lane, from the Strand—when the rush of two or three persons, evidently making their escape from some pursuer or pursuers, broke the phalanx, and having extended one of our two watchmen in the kennel, and fallen—two of them at least—in company with the other, over some steps at the corner, Blencow, whose activity was a native qualification, immediately saw the means of escape left open to him—and not being bound by his parole to abide the will and pleasure of his guard, hesitated not to spring from the spot, and, by speedily turning down a bye street, to effect his purpose, even without exciting a timely alarm from his discomfited guardians, whom he left oc-

cupied in recovering their legs, and in endeavouring to secure their new assailants.

Having brought his history up to this point, Percy demanded whether he had secured the watch—which he immediately produced, having put it into his pocket, when it was first delivered, and thus saved it from the observation of his captors.

Percy found his old comrade in a state of mind not exactly calculated for a lecture—for there were no terms in which he could have expressed his abhorrence of the principles by which he had been deluded, that Blencow would, at the moment, have considered sufficiently strong to mark his reprobation of them, and of himself. He therefore contented himself with the more grateful task of soothing his harassed mind, and by shewing him that his present escape seemed to be the work of his good genius, in order to shew him what might have been the consequences of his errors—and to prove the necessity of future abstinence from the haunts and society of such unprincipled companions.

He dismissed his poor penitent, more easy in

his mind than he had been for some time past, and promised to see him the next day,—after he should have taken certain measures, which rapidly crossed his mind, as being due to himself, and the public, with respect to these desperadoes. It must be confessed he could not wholly separate these persons from the Dossiters, whose dependants they appeared—and whose tools he suspected them to be.

The assertion of the man, Jarvis, of his having discovered, in Lord Brandon, the stolen child of Mr Rycott, by a mark—of which it will be recollected express mention had been made in the course of evidence produced before the jury at Carlisle—afforded much food for reflection; and the mention of Dossiter's name, as connected with the circumstance, although it could at present afford no clew for bringing any specific charge home to that honest gentleman, was yet sufficient to impress upon Percy's mind a full conviction, that he was at the bottom of the transaction, and that his alarm at the accidental meeting of Lord Harweden and himself on the day of his first introduction, was in some manner connected with it.

To have discovered the real child of Mr Rycott would have been a satisfaction to him as great as he could have possibly enjoyed after he had been torn from him as a son—but, even if the words of Jarvis were to be credited to their fullest extent—and, even were the young man, who had, by some sinister means, been made to usurp the title of Lord Brandon, to recover from the wounds which Blencow had described to be of so serious a nature—what comfort or consolation to Mr Rycott's declining years would be a being so irrecoverably lost to every sort of feeling, honor, or propriety? Percy felt at one moment as if Providence had pointed him out as an instrument in so extraordinary a discovery—and yet—should he not rather become by this very circumstance the agent of misery to one whose happiness he now felt it his duty to promote by every means within his power or ability?—What was to be done? He fell into a disturbed slumber after he had been some time in bed—which in no degree tended to solve the difficulty; and the only resolution he came to, when he awoke in the morning, was to impose silence upon Blencow, as to this part of

the transaction altogether—and to take more time to digest the measures he might think proper hereafter to adopt in investigating the business.

His first step was to call upon Dossiter the elder—and finding him at home—he came at once to the point, in order to form some opinion from the first impression made upon the man of law, by a recapitulation of the lawless proceedings of the preceding evening—but Percy, in his way back to Chambers, was compelled to acknowledge, that, if called upon in a court of justice to depose whether Mr Dossiter was previously acquainted with the whole series of transactions—or now heard them for the first time, he should not know exactly how to answer the question.

When the situation of Lord Brandon came under consideration—the lawyer observed, that "he had always looked to it—it was a natural consequence." When Percy expressed his astonishment that a man, so high in the confidence of Mr Dossiter as Driblet, should be able to carry on so nefarious a traffic, without having incurred suspicion, the lawyer checked him—with "Enough, enough—I know what you would say—a credu-

lous fool, not to have watched him closer!"—but this certainly was not the inference Percy meant to draw.

When Percy expressed, in very strong terms, his regrets that a simple lad, like Blencow, should have been drawn in by these knavish companions—Mr Clement was evidently thinking of something else, for, without even the precaution of looking round the room, he bolted out the unpolished denunciation of "Cursed asses," against them, "for their pains!"

"Sir!—do I understand you?" asked Percy, in a tone that quickly recalled the wandering politician.

"Probably not—for I don't understand myself—they are rather rogues than ——"

"Villains rather than either!" exclaimed Percy.

"Enough, enough—speak lower—you will be heard."

"What care I, Mr Dossiter?—I have nothing to conceal. I ——"

"Enough—we must investigate this affair—but there is no occasion to let them into our plans."

"I have no plans—my proceedings will be very strait forward—I shall have the fellow Jarvis apprehended."

"Will you, by G——?" cried Dossiter, with a vivacity, and an expression of countenance, which was far beyond the reach of Percy's talent to decypher.

"That will I,"—replied Percy, in a tone of determination, that could not be mistaken.

"I—I would rather not be employed, Mr Mallory, but—you cannot take your measures too soon—I can recommend an honest attorney."

"In London?" asked Percy, with an expression of incredulity, which could neither escape, nor be suffered to pass without notice by the lawyer, who replied,——

"Know what you would say—lawyers all rogues—old prejudices—enough, enough—it's the way with the world," and he smiled—but not as men smile when they are particularly well pleased.

Percy bowed as he was retreating from the apartment—Dossiter followed him—and taking his hand, which was upon the lock, gently closed

the door, as he whispered in his young friend's ear—"You must lose no time in proceeding against this Jarvis—he is a villain, Mr Percy."

"You know him, then—and ——"

"Enough, enough—don't speak so loud—I know him to be a man, whom it would be an act of public justice to hang."

"Might you not have taken upon you, with so intimate a knowledge of ——"

"Enough—enough!—not a word—by the Lord, I would have done it if I could, long ago."

"And yet your head, confidential clerk ——"

"Hush—hush!—know what you would say—wheel within wheel."

"Which you ——"

"Am about to unravel by your information—I can never be too thankful ——"

"No thanks to me, Sir."

"Enough—enough—you are too modest—but ——"

"Blencow's description of this man's abode is sufficient for the direction of the magistrate."

"The fellow's already in custody, for Lord Brandon's affair."

"How know you that, Mr Dossiter?"

"Know it!—why—why—of course—no officers who were acquainted with their duty would suffer him to escape, under such circumstances of suspicion."

"And your clerk, Driblet!"

"I'll not detain you,"—and he opened the door for Percy.

"Is your clerk ———"

"Enough, enough—don't let it appear that you know anything about him—here, Thomas—open the door—Mr Percy, your humble servant—nay, nay—not a word," whispering him, "in this open hall,"—and he effectually prevented any indiscretion of this nature, by precipitately retreating into the parlour.

Percy—consulting with the gentleman under whom he had been placed as a pupil—was soon instructed in the line of proceeding necessary to be adopted, in bringing the purloiner of his watch to justice; and he was the more solicitous upon the subject, than either an abstract love of justice—coupled, as it was in his nature, with a disposition, strongly tinctured with the divine attribute

of mercy, could reasonably account for; but the fact was, the more he saw into the business, the more strongly was his suspicion excited against the Dossiters—and he felt so completely assured that these wretches were merely the inferior links of a chain, by which the father and the son bound their victims, among the higher as well as the lower orders of a thoughtless and dissipated community, to their extensive schemes of depredation, that he could not resist the impulse he felt to be instrumental in their defeat and exposure.

The information which Clement Dossiter did *not* mean to convey to Percy—namely, the imprisonment of Jarvis and Driblet—proved to be correct. The state of Lord Brandon's constitution—weakened and inflamed by every species of dissipation—was little calculated to contend with the fever produced by the wounds and bruises inflicted upon him in the late affray, and his medical attendants had declared his life to be in imminent danger. Jarvis and Driblet, the latter of whom, it appeared, passed under the *alias* of Mr Burton at the west end of the town, were apprehended; and whilst his Lordship was carefully removed

to the mansion of Lord Harweden—they, with less ceremony, but with full as much care, were conducted to a place of security, to await the event of the night's adventure.

Percy now viewed the Earl of Harweden in the light of a victim, and doubted not that his confidence had been abused by his villainous agents to some purposes which it might yet be in his power to frustrate or counteract.

Upon receiving, on the following afternoon, accounts of Lord Brandon's danger, he, therefore, resolved to communicate all that he had learned from the recital of Blencow, without delay to the Earl—as the only plain strait-forward mode of proceeding adapted to his views, and the exigency of the case. He never for a moment reflected upon the disparity of rank; and as he proceeded with rapid steps towards his Lordship's house, he had collected so many concurring motives, in favour of the interview he was about to seek, that, by the time he had knocked at the door, he was perfectly satisfied that he had been guilty of a neglect of duty in having so long deferred his visit.

He quickly demanded of the porter whether Lord Harweden was at home.

"Your name, Sir?" was the counter-question.

"Psha—what signifies my name—is he, or is he not, at home—or if not, where is he to be found?"

"Found!—that's a good one—Can't answer your question, Sir—till I know your business."

"Business—business of the highest importance—answer me, then, Sir—is Lord Harweden, or is he not, at home?"

"Not to any one without a name."

"Sirrah—do you ——"

"One word for all, Sir—it's as much as my place is worth, to be carrying messages backwards and forwards to my Lord from nobody knows who."

Percy found that he was not likely to get any advantage in a discussion with a personage who, besides his own scruples of conscience, had the power—as the half folding-door was in his hand—of closing it in his own manner and at his own will, at any given moment. He therefore gave the man his address—and was admitted, by the

proper officers of the interior, into a handsome waiting-room, with a promise that it should be immediately conveyed to his Lordship.

Percy was not in the habit—nor, indeed, was he particularly qualified to cool his heels, as it is technically termed, in the anti-room of a great man—and there is no saying into what breach of established etiquette he might have been hurried, had he been long detained in this novel situation, within immediate reach of a man, whom he considered it as much his right and duty, as it was his determination, to see without delay.

His patience was not put to this test.—By the rapid return of his Lordship's own man, it appeared that Lord Harweden was as ready to admit our young friend as he was to be received.

His Lordship met him, as he entered the library, with every mark of attention, and expressed himself happy on the occasion of his visit; adding, "It is indeed a charitable one, Mr Mallory, in such a moment as this."

Percy reflected that the feelings of another were concerned in what was to follow—and this

was the first check he had encountered in his scheme of going straight-forward to his purpose.

"How is your—that is—I mean Lord Brandon, my Lord?"

"Alas! Sir, there are no hopes—I have just parted from his principal medical attendant, who has candidly stated his opinion to me."

"There may be—I mean, my Lord—in all cases of this nature—there may be considerations ——"

"I understand you, Mr Mallory—pray be seated—I will not deny, that the utter disappointment of all my hopes respecting this young man—his utter contempt of my counsels—of my commands—his inveterate habits of—I grieve to say it—the lowest and most degrading dissipation and profligacy—which, in such a moment, I would forget, if they did not force themselves upon me as the source of all my misery for some years past—have, I confess, tended very much to break the weight of the impending blow."

"No doubt, my Lord—but there are—that is, there might be circumstances—but I beg pardon,

I am so used to think aloud, and so unused to beat about for ——"

"I request you will put no restraint upon yourself on my account, Mr Mallory—you can say nothing for which I am not fully prepared."

"I must doubt that, my Lord—but—will your Lordship permit me to put a question in ——?"

"In any way you please."

"Were there any circumstances—I really am at a loss to word what I have to say—was there anything peculiar, my Lord—in the birth of Lord Brandon?"

"None that ever reached my ears;"—but his Lordship's attention seemed to be roused—as well it might—at so strange an interrogatory.

"I mean—is your Lordship sure—that—in short, Lord Brandon is actually your son?"

"Sir!"—exclaimed his Lordship, starting from his chair.

"Nay, my Lord—I feared to offend or wound you—but now that the ice is broken ——"

"The ice broken, Mr Mallory!—do you purpose to ——"

"I purpose only, my Lord—if you will do me the honor to sit down"—Percy had taken a lesson, it should appear, from his friend Sir Hugh —"and to listen with attention to what I have to say."

His Lordship obeyed in silence.

"I have reason—good reason, my Lord, to believe—that the unfortunate young man, who is now dying beneath your roof, is no more your Lordship's son than I am—and further than this—I am well—intimately acquainted with his real father."

"And who—who, Sir—dared divulge this to you?" demanded his Lordship, in a tone of strong indignation—and again starting from his seat, "Has that villain, Dossiter ——"

"He is at the bottom of it, I am satisfied," replied Percy.

"And he told you ——"

"Not exactly—but those in his employ betrayed it."

"Then, Mr Mallory, I am in your power, and you know me for what I am—but I would explain ——" and his Lordship sank into his chair

evidently overpowered in the contest with his feelings.

"Good Heavens!" cried Percy—"What is the meaning of all this?"

"That knaves cannot be true even to each other."

"You speak riddles, my Lord!"

"Which you at least can solve."

"I know only ——"

"What?"

"That the villain who, if not the agent in the death of the young man, calling himself Lord Brandon, was a primary cause of it—betrayed the secret in a moment of surprise and agitation, and clearly implicated the elder Dossiter in the transaction."

"Then Dossiter is not your informant?"

"I am not likely, my Lord, to be the depositary of Mr Dossiter's confidences," observed Percy, somewhat proudly.

"Would to Heaven I could say as much!" sighed his Lordship.

"Had your Lordship any suspicion then ——"

"You know too much—and I have betrayed

myself too far to conceal what remains to be told —the secret, which has preyed like a worm upon my vitals for so many years—the dread of whose discovery has guarded every word, thought, and look, and left me a helpless victim, bound hand and foot at the caprice of a villain, who never relaxed his hold upon me for a moment—hath burst its bounds at the first bidding of youth and ingenuousness, which, far from suspecting, is, I see, at this very instant, almost incredulous of my guilt. But enough of this—to whom, let me first ask, do you suppose this unhappy boy to belong?"

"To an old and valued friend—a more than father to me, my Lord—one to whom I owe all that I possess on earth—one upon whom I was surreptitiously imposed, as was this young man on your Lordship—a changeling—a nobody ——"

"Who!—speak, who are you?"

"For nineteen years I was the cherished son ——"

"Of—of ——"

"Mr Rycott."

"Gracious Providence!—in this surely is thy

interposition visible—and—and Dossiter knew this?"

"To his care was I consigned by my benefactor."

"This is mystery and villainy doubly involved. His anxiety to keep us apart is now explained, and the account of your antipathy to me."

"Did he dare use my name to a ——"

"He dared practise—as he has done through life—a deception upon me, because he knew I was in his power.—Sir—Mr Mallory—I can be as severe a judge upon my own past life as you—or the most rigid censor can be.—One false step has involved me in a succession of mean, low subterfuges, insomuch that I have, I repeat, scarcely dared for years to hold up my head in the society of honest or honorable men. There were family considerations of the highest value, as I deemed them at the time, that induced me, after the loss of several children, to desire an heir to my honors and title, and the unexpected pregnancy of Lady Harweden was hailed by me as an answer to my daily prayers to Heaven—such as they were—for the fulfilment of my hopes. Still—apprehending the

chances of failure, by the birth of a girl instead of a boy, I sounded the son of my late father's steward—who was a quick intelligent young man, and destined to the Bar, to ascertain whether he was disposed to undertake a scheme for rendering me secure against the alternative of a failure—I found him ready to meet me more than half-way, and to outrun me in the road of villainy and imposture."

"And this, my Lord—was Mr Clement Dossiter?"

"The same."

"Or rather Maitland!"

"How know you that?"

"Too well is it recorded in my memory, my Lord—with every word that went like a dagger to my soul, when I found that I had been the wretched victim of this intrigue."

"When—and where?"

"In the late trial at Carlisle."

From Lord Harweden the whole of these proceedings had been carefully concealed, for some purpose, by Dossiter—and this had been rendered the easier on his part by the steps taken by Mr

Rycott—for that gentleman having rebuilt, in his mind's eye, the whole fabric, as soon as he found the event of the trial had overthrown it—had, as part of his scheme, taken the precaution to reverse the order of more fashionable adepts—and by bribing high, to keep himself, and those involved with him, out of print and publicity.

It appeared that Lord Harweden had expressed his determination to Dossiter, when the compunctious visitings of conscience had been awakened, in the progress of years, by a more sober retrospect of his past life, and the return he had hoped for in the filial conduct of his supposed son, was so fearfully denied to him—to afford his most ample assistance to the young man, imposed upon Mr Rycott, should any event lead to the discovery of the imposition.

Whether Mr Dossiter thought his Lordship's money and patronage might be diverted into a better channel, than that which he proposed, as a sedative to a qualmish conscience—or whether there were latent motives, which "none but his parallel" could be competent to discover—the event clearly proved that, not only had he been

most sedulous in keeping the change in Percy's fortune a profound secret from his Lordship—but that he had scarcely ever committed himself to so *near* a chance of being detected in a manœuvre, as on the occasion of the meeting which took place on Percy's *mal apropos* introduction to Lord Harweden on his first arrival in town.

The reader will, without any assistance on our part, be fully able to reconcile the events disclosed on the trial at Carlisle, with the share which Lord Harweden, by his own confession, bore in the transaction; but there were other circumstances connected with it, which, it appeared, his Lordship was about to communicate to Percy, when the door of the apartment was thrown open, and Mr Clement Dossiter, without appearing to notice Percy, whose back was to the light, and which had been nearly excluded by the half closed shutters and curtains, announced that "all was over"—and unless it might be attributed to good acting—he appeared to our young friend to be considerably agitated and affected by the event, which he almost shuddered as he communicated.

Lord Harweden received the intelligence of the

pseudo Lord Brandon's death as might be supposed, in a case where so many conflicting feelings were struggling within his breast, that none could be said to have the mastery or ascendancy over another. He threw himself back in his chair, and for a few moments closed his eyes, as if in the act of deep meditation, *or* prayer.—In the mean time, Dossiter, whose eyes were never closed, caught the form of Percy in the shade, and starting, as if he had seen the spirit, which had just taken its departure from within those walls, could not repress the ejaculation of——

"Mr Percy Mallory here!"

"Is Mr Dossiter's licence necessary for my admission?" demanded Percy, who rose indignantly —nay, as if half inclined to resent the insult of an address from a man, of whose character he could no longer entertain a doubt.

"Enough—enough, Mr Percy—know it all."

"Know what, Sir?—speak out, for I have no concealments."

"So much the worse—so much the worse—young men should be cautious."

"And old ones honest—Mister Dossiter!"

"Enough—know what you would say—his Lordship has been talking ——"

"Peace," cried Lord Harweden, starting from his reverie; "your reign is over, Sir—your trammels are broken—and I may hold you up to the world, as what, to my cost, I know you to be ——"

"Your Lordship will do well—but there is another portrait to be introduced on the canvas!"

"Who must acknowledge he is a villain too."

"Enough, enough—know exactly—awkward—awkward, my Lord—and, perhaps, a little recollection may bring your Lordship back."

"To thy toils, man!—never flatter yourself—I shall throw off the burthen which has weighed me down to the grave, and seek, in repentance, some expiation for a single crime—but you, who know not what conscience is, even by sympathy, will have the taunts and indignation of an injured world, to inflict the only punishment you dread—the exposure of your rank hypocrisy."

"Your Lordship is unreserved—unusually free in your animadversions."

"Because I am free from the tyranny which has so long enthralled me."

"And like those, who too suddenly break their bonds, run into the opposite error."

"A moral reflection comes with a good grace from Mr Clement Dossiter!" exclaimed Percy, with a mixture of contempt and indignation, at the cool, collected, and insolent air, with which the lawyer met his exposure before a third person.

"The Devil can quote Scripture," said Lord Harweden, addressing himself to Percy.

"I may quote something better—at least more to the purpose—unless your Lordship's memory has already suggested it," retorted Dossiter.

"Villain!—dare but to breathe a thought upon the subject"—and Lord Harweden seemed to have an eye to the collar of the lawyer, as he rose and put forth his hand.

"Enough—enough, my Lord—your Lordship knows I am not easily intimidated."

"Would that his Lordship would commission me!" exclaimed Percy, unable to keep down his boiling indignation.

"Enough—enough, Mr Percy—his Lordship wants no ——"

"No what, Sirrah?"

"Second—Mr Percy Mallory," then turning to his Lordship, with a steady but ghastly smile, for the only extraordinary change on this extraordinary occasion, in the appearance of Mr Dossiter, was in the white and livid hue of his complexion —he added, in a low tone of voice——

"There are certain parts of a compact ——"

"Everything is void between us—and you will, by to-morrow morning, be prepared to surrender an account of my affairs into the hands of one who must be satisfied of ——"

"Enough, my Lord Harweden—there is one particular, which can only be settled between the principals."

"Do you dare, pettifogger as you are," cried Percy, "to call upon his Lordship to ——"

"Not in a case, I repeat, where a second, Mr Percy Mallory, will be at all acceptable to his Lordship."

"Speak out, villain!" exclaimed the now too highly irritated Peer, "nor dare insinuate ——"

"Nothing, my good Lord, that I will not prove even—under black and white."

"Thinkest thou, weak man," retorted his Lordship, "thinkest thou, that I regard the forfeiture—that a few thousands shall be put in competition with ——"

"With nothing, my Lord! I have been a faithful agent to your Lordship, and have done my best to save you from such an inconvenience."

"You have not dared ——"

"Indeed I have, my Lord—and in my time I have dared much more for your Lordship—I need not, therefore, trouble you with ——"

"Stop, Sir—and inform me ——"

"My agency is at an end, my Lord—good afternoon, Mr Percy Mallory—my Lord, I am yours in all—but to command;" and, as he had sidled towards the door, was, in an instant, on the other side of it.

"Shall I stop him, my Lord?" cried Percy hastily advancing.

"No, no—it is a relief, at all events, to shut out the object—I must act, and you, perhaps, may, if I judge your character aright, be disposed to

befriend a deserted old man, who has not a friend on earth, whose services he can command—and who never needed an active one more than in the present crisis!"

"It is not for me, my Lord, to make professions of friendship, upon so short an acquaintance as ——"

"No, Mr Percy Mallory," said his Lordship, interrupting him, "so far from possessing any claim upon your regard—the nearer you approach me with your good will, the more violent will you recoil, when you come to know me as I am—but I feel my strength failing me—I have a depression—a sinking at my heart—I must lose no time in throwing myself upon your humanity—nothing shall be concealed from you, but you must spare me the degradation of ——"

"Spare yourself, my Lord—you look ill—give me your instructions—I require—I am entitled to no confessions—you are evidently the victim of this villain's machinations, and I cannot err in offering my unconditional services in such a moment."

"You will unman me, Sir, if I listen to sen-

timents, which have, for so many years, been alien to my habits and associations—but, I am very, very ill, Mr Mallory."

"Shall I send for ——"

"No, no—the task must be performed. In that red box, of which this is the key, you will find such documents as are necessary to spare me all personal explanation. These you can peruse at your leisure—but, Sir—Mr Mallory—the immediate, the pressing occasion for your assistance, which I scarcely know how to ——"

"Name it—name it, my Lord. I bind myself to your service, if I may judge of the momentous consequences, of being in the power of such practised villains as the Dossiters."

"Save—save, then, my daughter, from the intrigues of this man, and his yet more artful son."

"Your daughter, my Lord!—Where is she?" demanded Percy, rising from his seat, and seizing his hat.

"It may appear strange to you, my good young friend," said his Lordship, gently arresting him, "that I should be unable, directly, to answer your question—but I think I may furnish

you with a clew sufficient to guide you in your pursuit. In a few words, my poor girl has been unhappy. Habits of seclusion, and a life of retirement from all active pursuits or pleasures, rendered a mind, not naturally strong, visionary, and romantic in its attachments, and the loss of a friend, in whom all her affections appeared to be centered, produced such an effect upon it, that her reason becamc affected—and she is—but there is torture in the retrospect."

" Spare yourself, my Lord—only point the road, and in such a cause, my life ——"

" I trust there is no such hazard—but my poor child is under restraint—and has, for nearly two years, been the inmate of an establishment under the superintendence of a Dr Beekerdyke, in the neighbourhood of Stamford, in Northamptonshire."

" Surely, my Lord, all that is necessary for me, is an order from your Lordship ?"

" No—no—distract me not—in an evil hour I consented—yes—but I shall appear a greater villain than I am, by partial communication or confession. I am sick at heart—in a word, my con-

sent to unite her in marriage with young Dossiter was wrung from me—you will find all in the papers—it was only a conditional pledge—but still they possess the instrument upon which the death of my —— of the supposed Lord Brandon, has stampt a value sufficient to expedite all their measures—and this it was, that the villain, even now, obviously pointed at. Oh! Mr Mallory, see what it is to deviate—see into what an abyss one false step in life sinks a man!—Think what a soul like mine, conscious of all that is due to the rank and dignity of a family, no less distinguished for its antiquity, than the patriotism and valour which have illustrated its descent—proud, haughty, and aspiring, too, in the first career of manhood—think—think what must have been my agony, my sufferings, my degradation, goaded by the constant admission, that my character was in the hands, and at the caprice, of a sordid wretch, who had not even the delicacy to leave my conscience to work in secret, but made, at every successive step, the sacrifice of my peace and fortune, the stipulated price of his forbearance. Villain!—how has he ——" A convulsive

spasm affected every muscle of Lord Harweden's face, and checked his words. He caught at Percy's arm, but it lost its power before it could reach its object, and he would have fallen forward, had not Percy caught him up, and raised him on his seat.—Tearing off his stock, he rang the bell with violence, and whilst his Lordship's own man aided him in loosing his dress, he despatched another servant for medical aid.

His Lordship spoke not—moved not—but he breathed, and it was deemed prudent to convey him to his chamber before the arrival of the physician, whose carriage fortunately being found in an adjoining street, was, in as short a time as possible, at the side of his patient. He pronounced the attack to be paralytic, and the family surgeon arriving a few minutes after him, the usual methods and remedies were employed, to restore the functions of life. For some time, the medical men professed to entertain very faint hopes of recovery—but, gradually, more favourable symptoms presented themselves, and after a night passed in unremitting watchfulness and care by Percy, the eyes of the patient evinced a partial con-

sciousness of his situation, and turning slowly upon the various objects around him, were at length fixed, and with an increased expression of anxiety, upon our young friend, who, in spite of his wish and readiness to fulfil the wishes of Lord Harweden, could not prevail upon himself to leave him entirely to the care of mercenary dependants, until his fate, which seemed to hang by a thread, should be decided.

Some cordials were now administered, and by ten o'clock in the morning, his Lordship had so far recovered the use of his speech, as to be able to return answers to the questions put to him by the surgeon who was left in attendance upon him, and even to express his wishes, the first and foremost of which was addressed to Percy, who, in consequence of them, pledged himself to set forward immediately upon his expedition, his Lordship giving orders, at the same time, to his own man, to have his travelling-carriage prepared for the purpose. Percy despatched a servant to his chambers for the few necessaries which might be required for his journey, being resolved to remain with his patient, as long as he possibly could do

so, consistently with the more active measures necessary for his peace of mind.

Before Percy left the house, he took the medical man aside, and requested his sincere and candid opinion respecting his Lordship's situation, which was answered by an ominous shake of the head, and the more clearly expressed apprehension, that a second fit would be fatal. The fact appeared to be, that his Lordship had not strength sufficient to encounter another attack, should it take place. At the same time, it was a favourable symptom, that the disease had yielded to the remedies resorted to—and that there was nothing at present to warrant the apprehension of any immediate recurrence of a similar seizure.

"What has this villain to answer for?" almost exclaimed Percy, as he turned from the surgeon, to attend the summons of the servant, who announced the carriage to be at the door, into which, just as he was about to slip, a note was put into his hand by the servant who had been sent to the Temple for his things. Not conceiving it to be of any consequence, he threw it into the carriage,

and darting after it, ordered the boys to drive on.

As it would not occasion any great deviation from the high road, he determined to call in Chancery Lane, in his way out of town, in order, if possible, to ascertain the real position of the opposite party. He had the precaution to leave the carriage in Holborn, and to proceed on foot to Mr Dossiter's. The only answer returned to his inquiries by the servant was, that neither the father nor the son were at home—but having ascertained that Blencow was in the office, he learned from him, that the former had left the house early in the morning, having been employed half the night alone in the office—but that the young man had been absent from town nearly a week—that is, ever since the unfavourable report of the physicians respecting the situation of Lord Brandon. Blencow looked wise, and intimated, that his absence had been occasioned by the dread of being involved with Jarvis and Driblet, who were in close confinement, and who had it in their power to implicate him in all their misdeeds. Percy accounted for his absence in a different

way, and almost despaired of success in any attempt to counteract measures, in which his opponent had possessed the incalculable advantage of a week's start of him.

Blencow was earnest in his entreaties to be permitted to accompany Percy, who merely stated, that he was leaving town upon business; but this was negatived on every account. Percy could not yet sufficiently rely upon his steadiness to admit him to his confidence—and his presence in London was necessary, not only to watch over the motions of his employers, but as an evidence upon the trial, now rendered inevitable by the death of the supposed Lord Brandon.

Percy proved to be as little versed in the arts of intrigue as Blencow himself, when he calculated upon the success of leaving a spy unmolested in the enemy's quarters—for before the former could have reached the end of his first stage, the latter received a written order from the elder Dossiter, to provide himself with other quarters before night. The lawyer had, no doubt, been informed of the interview between the two friends —and as open war had now been declared be-

tween the principals, he was not the sort of man to afford any unnecessary advantages to those against whom he was about to enter the lists

CHAPTER III.

PERCY pursued his journey with ardour, and made such inquiries at every inn at which he changed horses, as he conceived likely to elicit information respecting young Dossiter. He looked into every carriage he met on the road,—and cross-examined every post-boy, as to whom he had driven every day for the last week past—but although there is not much distinction in dress, to aid in identifying this or that particular young gentleman in the present age—he never could obtain a whole length portrait that tallied altogether with his several details. He got scent of no less than three drab great-coats, which he knew to be young Dossiter's travelling or driving costume—but they were all too fat or too tall in their minuter specification. He received reports

of twelve or fourteen blue coats, and drab trowsers, but here the chaos was impenetrable—and although only two sky-blue silk handkerchiefs stood in fair relief, out of the mass of black *en militaire*—the one turned out to be a Lincolnshire drover, and the other an alderman's sick darling and only hope, wrapped up in his lady mother's Barcelona, to save him from the draughts and blights incident to travelling.

During a flat and heavy stage—where he could see considerably in advance—he determined to examine the contents of Lord Harweden's confidential box—and having secured the key, which Mr Bramah's ingenuity had rendered compendiously small, to his watch chain, he examined the pockets of the carriage and the sword case for the important casket.—It was not to be found—he had brought it down from Lord Harweden's room—he had only delivered it into the hands of his Lordship's *gentleman*, to place in the carriage, whilst he stopped to speak to the surgeon. He searched every corner of the carriage—in vain It must have been left behind.—No matter. He needed no stimulus to his present exertion, and

from what his Lordship had more than intimated respecting his own private history, it was probable that his zeal in the cause might be extenuated rather than elevated by a full disclosure of his Lordship's history.

In the progress of his search—if he failed to discover what he was looking for, he found that for which he had forgotten to look—namely, the note which had been put into his hands, as he entered the carriage, and which had, in the rapid motion of the vehicle, insinuated itself between the cushions and the seat. He opened it, and found it be from Lady Sarah Henessey—informing him—" That she had returned to town, and was anxious to do justice to one for whom she entertained so partial an opinion, and, at the same time, to exonerate herself from the charge of wanton or intentional neglect towards him. She had a most extraordinary revelation to make, which she again entreated he would enable her to do in person, with as little delay as possible." What was to be done?—To retrace his steps was out of the question. Her Ladyship in her turn would have to charge him with neglect or inattention—he

could explain this on his return. A change of horses diverted the current of his thoughts—and a rapid succession of carriages more fully engaged his attention.

He did not reach Stamford until the shades of night had involved the surrounding objects in darkness—and hurrying after the landlord up stairs to the best room—as the lights had discovered to mine host's experienced eye the coronet upon the carriage—he began to challenge his information, and to examine him categorically, upon all the events and passages of the history of his house for the last seven days. The landlord, who calculated upon the consequence and importance of his guest, expressed his readiness to answer all questions put to him, by one who appeared more disposed to talk than to wait for replies, —bowed with all submission, and only requested permission to wait upon some parting guests who were just stepping into the London mail, pledging himself to an immediate return. Percy was too reasonable to refuse the request, but too impatient to brook it without a little derangement of his philosophy—and walking up and down the

room in that feverish state in which a man awaits information which he has travelled ninety miles to obtain—was arrested, just as he reached a window which looked upon the street, by the shrill horn of the guard's last summons. His eyes fell upon the door of the mail-coach, which stood open immediately beneath them—and were distended for a moment, when, by the light of a lanthorn held up by the waiter, he perceived a drab great-coat dart into the vehicle, so perfectly correspondent with his notion of young Dossiter's costume, that with the same velocity he endeavoured to throw up the window—but the door of the coach was shut with a loud report—"All ready," and the smack of the coachman's whip whirled off the carriage before he could achieve his object, or carry into effect the supplementary one of running down stairs and stopping it. Had he taken time to consult the best means of effecting his purpose, he might have engaged auxiliaries in the gaping attendants, who had been amusing themselves, as was their wont throughout every evening of the year—in seeing the "coach off,"—but trusting to his single arm, his heels and voice, he

flew past them, and shouting as the receding wheels continued to distance him—he found himself almost at the extremity of the town, without his hat, and, what was more sensibly felt at the moment, without being able even to hear the roll of the carriage wheels, and only in an interval when he had paused, in "confounding his own folly" for not having watched the mail as he had done almost every other carriage on the road—a few indistinct blasts of the distant horn served to shew the distance it had gained upon him.

He returned—looking, as he afterwards acknowledged, very sheepishly—to his inn—where grooms, ostlers, and those customary loungers at inn doors, whom we have already noticed, were patiently waiting the return of the crazy gentleman—whom, in their sagacity, they whispered, had broken loose from his keepers at Wilsden or Waterbury! But the coronet on the pannels warned the landlord to silence these impertinent remarks—and, considering a mad Lord by far a better article than a sober gentleman, he stood foremost of the groupe, with his Lordship's hat in his

hand, which he had officiously provided against his return.

"Is there anything we can do for you, my Lord?" was the first question.

"Yes—order four horses to my carriage."

"Where to, my Lord?"

"Psha!—back towards London."

The man stared.

"Pray, Sir—do you know one Doctor Beekerdyke?" was his next rapid question.

"Sir!" exclaimed the landlord, who, with a candle in his hand, was preceding him up the stairs—but who actually turned round to face him, with eyes seeming ready to start out of their sockets.

"Do you know a Doctor Beekerdyke in this neighbourhood—is there anything extraordinary in the question?"

"Oh! dear, no—no—my Lord"—and he began to ascend the stairs more rapidly, casting his eyes still behind him.

At length having reached the room, and placed candles on the table, the landlord retreated, and

took his station by the door, as if he felt it necessary to secure the means of sudden retreat.

"Why do you not answer my question, Sir?" demanded Percy—who, out of breath, and somewhat out of temper at the apparent disinclination of the man to answer his question—"Do you—or do you not, know a Doctor Beekerdyke, residing somewhere in this neighbourhood?"

"Ye-s—ye-s—my Lord."

"Why this nonsense about my Lord?—I am no Lord, I repeat to you—speak."

"I will, my—my Lord."

"Again!—the man's mad, I believe."

"Oh! no—my Lord—don't—don't talk of it—I'm sure Doctor Beekerdyke is a very, very good sort of man."

"Is he at home—is he likely ——"

"Oh! no, my Lord ——"

"Will you have done with this mummery?—I tell you I am no Lord."

"No—no!—I know it, my—I know you are just what your Lordship pleases. He shall never know a word of it from me—there's no chance of his being here to-night."

"Of whom are you speaking, man?"

"Of nobody, my —— I mean nobody that shall come near you, whilst I have a pair of hands, and a house over my head, to protect you!"

Percy threw himself in despair into an arm-chair, and rang the bell.

"Here I am, your—my—" cried the landlord, as answering the bell, but with his body half out of the door.

Percy rang again without attending to him, for in his own mind he was perfectly satisfied the man was insane, and that, in point of fact, he very probably was not even the master of the house. The landlord, who was as fully persuaded that his guest was some patient who had escaped from the care of this very Dr Beekerdyke, with whose name and peculiar professional practice he was well acquainted—was turning in his mind the most effectual mode of securing himself against any mischief which might threaten his person or establishment.

At length a waiter appeared, and the landlord, having taken his resolution as to future operations, effected his retreat, but not before he had whisper-

ed his conviction and determination, and warned the waiter as to his mode of treating their guest.

Percy inquired of this man, whether there were any female passengers in the mail which had just left the house, and being answered positively in the negative—he reflected, that although the man, of whose person he had caught a glimpse upon entering the mail, might be, and probably was, Clarendon Dossiter—he himself might still have to travel half the night without being able to overtake him, and that, as he was evidently unaccompanied by the Earl's daughter, it would be wiser to avail himself of his absence to continue his search after her on the spot. Turning to the waiter, therefore, he very gravely asked him—whether "that mad man was really the master of the house?"

"Yes—Sir"—was the man's tremulous reply.

"Is he married?" demanded he, with greater interest.

"Ye—yes, Sir."

"He should be taken care of."

"Yes—Sir."

"You have houses—that is, rece acles—and

good advice for disorders of this nature in the neighbourhood, I believe."

"Sir?"

"You have—what are called mad-houses—places of confinement."

"Oh! I assure you, Sir—upon my honor and conscience, we have no concerns or dealing with them, if you'll believe me."

"I see no reason to discredit you—without such strong asseverations, my good friend," observed Percy.

"Thank your Honor."

"Thank me!—For what?"

"For calling me your Honor's good friend—I'm sure I'm ready to be so."

"Why, you seem to be as crazy as your master—Where's your mistress?"

"Oh! Lud, Sir—she's so nervous, she daren't trust herself with—with ——"

"Nervous!—a precious family I've got into!" muttered Percy to himself, as he stirred the fire.

"Here, Sirrah"—after a pause, he said—"do you know Doctor Beekerdyke?"

"No—upon my honor — upon my soul, Sir."

"The Devil's in the people—what is the meaning of all this?—who do you take me for?—and what is all this cursed mummery ——"

"Me!—Oh! Sir—I take you for nobody—indeed I don't—Master——"

"Confound your master—go ——" but at this moment the ostler entered the room to inform Percy, that the horses were ready, and the carriage at the door.

"Pray, my good friend," said Percy to the new comer, and looking with no small degree of indignation at the retreating waiter—"you, perhaps, will have no objection to inform me whether you know Doctor Beekerdyke?"

"What!—the mad doctor?"

"Silence, you fool," muttered the waiter in his ear.

"What's I to be silent for, man?—a cabbage's a cabbage—why mayn't I call things by their right names?"

"Well said," quoth Percy smiling. "You are the only rational being in the house, I think. Pray—how far is it to the doctor's residence?"

"They call it six miles—but, for my part, I think it be more upon eight."

"That is," said Percy still smiling, "you charge eight."

"That's master's business, your Honor."

"Good road?"

"Much of a muchness for that—the greater part's sloughy—and over the common the cart track's up to the horses' bellies."

"Is the night dark?"

"As pitch."

"Then you may put up the horses till morning."

"Anan!"

"You may take off the horses."

"Why—the ticket's made out for Stilton—not for Waterbury."

"What have I to do with Waterbury?"

"What's sniggling at, mun?" demanded the man turning to the waiter. "Why, your Honor, I can't say—it's no business of mine, and hope t'will never be—but—you queried so much about the road, and then changed your mind."

"Leave the room, Sir—obey my orders—and

you, Sirrah"—turning to the waiter, who had remained at the door—"order me a bed—get me some dinner—and, d'ye hear, bring up my things."

Both the attendants, after exchanging looks, left the room—and Percy, whose mind was too much occupied to dwell long upon passing incidents, threw himself at his length upon a sofa, and began to meditate upon the curious situation in which he was placed:—a volunteer in the cause of a man of whom he knew little—and that little not abounding in "good report"—and a Quixote in search of adventures for a girl whose very existence was unknown to him four-and-twenty hours before. But both were sufferers, and one apparently as helpless as she was free from the errors of the other—though equally destined to be the victim of treachery and villainy. If he had no other motives than those proposed by Christian charity, they were surely sufficient to induce him to persevere when thus invested, by a strange concurrence of circumstances, with the exclusive power of rescuing both father and daughter, perhaps, from utter misery. He knew not

as far as his own fate was concerned, in the exchange of children, whether he ought to feel indignation or gratitude towards Lord Harweden. Through his means, however unintentional, he had received the advantages of education and of good principles, which, under the care of such a woman as his mother, could never have been his. He had, to be sure, experienced a reverse, which blasted the hopes he had been taught to entertain —but he had warm and zealous friends, who would do all in their power to heal the wounds which had thus been inflicted. Lord Harweden meant him individually no harm—a strange concatenation of events had led to the frustration of his Lordship's projects—but he himself alone had come uninjured out of the chaos which had been created by his domestic intrigues. He was reduced, it was true, to his original nothingness—but he had sustained only the loss of that to which he never had a just claim, and had gained that which embraced not only the means of securing all that was necessary to content and happiness in this life, but what was of infinitely greater importance—the knowledge and practice of duties which

would secure that peace, which is beyond all that treasure or title can bestow! He had arrived at this conclusion, when the important personage in the public establishments of the country, ycleped "Boots," entered the room, bearing upon his shoulders a "Sac de nuit," and, under one arm, a dressing-case, whilst, in doubtful suspension by a gilt ring, he held, at the full length of his other arm, a Morocco-leather box, such as are well known to the initiated, as the official depositories of state papers or despatches.

"These are your things, your Honor?"

"Yes," answered Percy, just turning his eye towards the spot where the man stood with the carpet bag on his shoulders.

"And this leather box too?"

"Yes—yes—hey—leather box!—Why, yes—but where did you find it?"

"It laid on the table in the bar, your Honor, by your things—so I supposed it were yours."

"It must be—strange too—set it down—say I am waiting for dinner"—and the man departed, having done as he was ordered.

"Where the deuce could the box have been

hidden in the carriage ?" was all that Percy said or thought upon the subject, as he dismissed it from his mind, and again fell into his former train of thought.

He was shortly after again interrupted by the entrance of the landlady—a neat, respectable-looking woman, who ventured not, however, beyond the door. She curtsied—and, as if in answer to the message delivered by the man whom Percy had just despatched, begged to observe, that " his Lordship had not ordered dinner."

" The blockhead of a waiter—my good Madam, I ordered it an hour ago—but ——"

" Don't be angry, my Lord—he thought as you didn't order any thing particular it might have gone out of your head."

" My stomach, then," said Percy smiling, and turning towards the lady, " would have had some reason to quarrel with it. Your husband"—and he had resumed all his gravity—" your husband, I fear ——"

" Oh ! pray, my Lord—don't have any spite against him—I assure you he is quite harmless."

"Well, well—if you are aware of his situation, it is no business of mine."

"He shall not appear again, my Lord."

"Then there's an end on't."

"Thank ye kindly, my Lord."

"Prithee, my good lady, do not dignify me with a title to which I have no claim whatever," said he smiling, "except as the illusion of your poor husband's imagination."

"Oh! no, my —— I mean —— that is—I beg pardon—I forgot that you didn't wish—I meant nothing wrong, indeed, Sir."

"I'm sure you did not—you don't look as if you meant wrong to any one—but can you not suffer me have some dinner?"

"Anything—to be sure, Sir—anything—that is ——"

"A beef-steak or a mutton-chop will do—whatever can be soonest made ready."

"Why—Sir—we have beef for steaks and mutton for chops—but I would rather—if you don't object—send up a boiled chicken."

"I don't particularly like boiled chicken," returned he laughing.

"Indeed, Sir—it's the best thing you could have—the doctor always says—I beg pardon, Sir."

"The deuce take the doctor—I am not on the doctor's list at present."

"Oh! no—I know that—I know that, Sir—I didn't mean to say as you was, I am sure, Sir—only—"

"Nay, then—send me up anything you like—I'm no epicure—but, I confess, I am voraciously hungry."

"Aye, Sir—that's —— but you shall have something nice immediately," and the good woman retired—or rather retreated, keeping an eye fixed upon every movement of her supposed patient, until she had closed the door between them.

Before Percy had brought Glendara Lodge and Loo Bellenden in vivid array before his mind's eye, and was about to enjoy the vision for which his imagination had supplied ample materials, the landlady re-entered, flanked and supported by two waiters, who placed several dishes on the table—and awakened him to the reality of something more sensual.

He seated himself—and ordering the covers to

be removed, found the threatened boiled chicken, the only substantial dish prepared for him—the rest consisting of vegetables, and very simple sauces.

"Is there nothing else coming?" asked Percy in a half querulous tone, looking round to the landlady, who was giving her directions in dumb-shew to her attendants.

"Nothing but a bread-pudding, my—Sir."

"A bread-pudding!—why, it seems a *maigre* day with you," replied he, half smiling, and half angry, as he divided the well grown chicken, or rather fowl, and placed one half of it on his plate.

"What wine have you, waiter?" demanded he, after he had eaten a few mouthfuls.

No answer was immediately returned—and he repeated the question.

"Tell his Lords—tell the gentleman," said the landlady, addressing herself in an under tone to her prime minister.

"We—we havn't got no wine, Sir,"—said the man in the hesitating tone of one who feels himself on the point of being detected in a downright falsehood.

"No wine!" ejaculated Percy, laying down his knife and fork—and looking the man in the face.

"We *have* wine, my Lord," observed the landlady, "in the cellar, but, my good man—that is—he is out, and has taken the keys with him."

"Your good man ought not to be trusted with the keys,"—and he turned round on his chair to give effect to the advice he meant to convey to the good man's wife.

He asked for ale, porter—brandy and water—but the water only was free from the careful custody of the absent landlord—and Percy significantly asking the sign of the inn, made an internal memorandum, never to put up there again as long as he lived.

Coffee was most readily furnished to him, after he had despatched all that had been set before as an apology for a dinner—and he found the muffins which accompanied it a very convenient supplement to the spare diet to which he had been subjected.

Having finally discussed these matters, he again betook himself to the consideration of the affair,

which had brought him into the country—and the waiter having removed the tray, rubbed down the table, and snuffed the candles, he desired him to bring the red box from the table in the corner, on which it had been placed with his other moveables.

The man, after looking about for some time, said there was no red box.

"Psha—the red leather box, there," pointing to the table.

"It's a blue box, my—your Honor."

"Have you no eyes—'tis red, I tell you—bring it here."

"It's blue, if ever I seed blue," the man began as he lifted it from the table, but, perceiving Percy to wax wroth, he added, "that is, as it stood in the dark corner—it's just as your Honor said."

"Why!—what is all this?—it is blue!"

"Yes—it's a blue like red, to be sure—as your Honor says so."

"Leave the room,"—and the waiter made but three steps to the door, in obedience to the com-

Lord Harweden's box was stampt upon the face of it, and the key he had delivered to him opened it.

His curiosity now got the better of any further speculation—and he began to dive into the depository, and to draw out, one after another, papers of various sizes and descriptions, each carefully docqueted and labelled—one, an assignment of property, whose title he had never heard of—another, a mortgage on an estate, which might have been in the clouds, for ought that he could urge to the contrary—a third, transfers—a fourth, leases, indentures, &c. &c.—all which he laid aside, as being, of course, foreign to his purpose. He now seized upon two or three pacquets of letters, which were all superscribed "Private," and some "To be burnt,"—and although apparently authorized by the Earl himself to peruse them, he felt a delicacy in thus obtruding even into the willing confidence of an absent person, who might, after all, intend only a partial or particular communication.

To such documents, however, necessarily private and confidential, his Lordship had referred

him for an explanation of the motives which had induced him to solicit his services—and he ought not to suffer any overstrained notions of delicacy to interfere in what, under all the circumstances of the case, might be considered no less a duty to himself than to his Lordship, in the critical state both of his health and his family.

He untied the pacquet, therefore, that lay under his hand, and unfolding one of the letters, found it to be from the elder Dossiter, addressed to his son—and of so recent a date, as to prove the utter impossibility of its ever having been in the possession of Lord Harweden, even if the few lines, which had arrested his attention, were not sufficient in themselves to prove, that they were never intended to meet his eyes. He closed the paper—and again began to question his right to examine papers and documents which, by some strange mistake, had evidently been exchanged, and could never have been intentionally submitted to his perusal. He had seen enough to satisfy him, that Lord Harweden would have a full and just right to examine such documents, without any scruple of conscience as to the mode of

their having found their way into his hands—but his curiosity could not discover a sufficient plea to justify him—a person wholly unconnected with the parties—in proceeding further in the business. He, therefore, closed the box, with the intention of securely transferring it to his Lordship's custody, on his return to town.

The enigma still remained to be solved, how the boxes could have been exchanged—for of that fact he was now satisfied—and the evidence of his senses could be no longer questioned. He rang the bell, and without acquainting the waiter with the motives of his inquiry, put several questions to him respecting the person whom he had seen enter the mail—and who, he was now more than ever convinced, was Clarendon Dossiter.

It came out—and there appeared some unassigned reason for its not having come out before—that this gentleman had arrived a few hours before in a hack-chaise and four, and that he had waited the arrival of the London mail, in order to proceed to town in it—that just as Percy arrived, and was passing near the window of the bar, this same gentleman had been observed to

start—and to retreat into a recess behind this sanctum—that further, he had recalled a certain great-coat which had been delivered into the charge of the guard, in which he carefully installed himself, although an inside passenger—and only at the moment when "all was ready," stepped into the coach, which drove off, as the door was closed upon him.

The mystery was cleared up. It was evident that young Dossiter, in his surprise at seeing Percy so unexpectedly on the spot, and under the impression of alarm at being discovered, had left the box on the table, where he probably had kept it under his own eye on account of its importance; and when, upon some further ingenious cross-examination—which was considerably facilitated by the waiter's alarm, lest he should irritate the "mad Lord," as he was by this time universally known and described throughout the inn—it appeared that his other luggage had been previously deposited in the coach, Percy no longer doubted the justice of his general inference.

Fatigued both in mind and body, he had determined to seek repose in bed, in order that he

might be able to rise by day-break, and pursue the scent which, he now satisfied himself, lay strong in the direct line before him—but just as he was applying his hand to the bell-rope, to announce his intention, the landlady appeared just within the door, to announce to him, in scarcely articulated words, that "a gentleman below wished to speak to his Lordship."

"To me!" demanded Percy; "for whom did he ask?"

"For nobody in particular, my—Sir."

"It cannot be—I know no person in these parts."

At this moment it occurred to Percy that it might be Clarendon, who, having missed his box, had preferred to encounter him, by returning to claim it, rather than risk the loss of what must evidently be of so much importance to his father's interests, as well as his own.

"Is he a young man, landlady?"

"Not very young, my—my—Sir."

"Dark complexioned—good looking?"

"Very dark—and as for good looking, my Lord—that's all taste, you know."

"Is it the person who went to London in the mail this evening?"

"Oh! dear Sir!—Lord love you, how could that be—but I don't mean any thing—I don't, indeed."

"Could he not have returned?"

"I beg pardon, my Lord—Sir—you had better see the gentleman—indeed, and indeed, you had."

"Well, my good woman, since you are so pressing, and I really wish to get to-bed, perhaps it is the shortest way. Shew him up by all means, I shall soon despatch him."—And Percy carefully lifted the box from the table, and was placing it behind his *sac de nuit*.

"For the love of God, my Lord—Sir," cried the woman, as if she apprehended something from the movement.

"Why—what ails thee—cannot you shew him up?"

"He means no harm, I assure you, Sir."

"Harm!—I don't suppose he does, or if he did"—and Percy stooped to take up the poker,

as if the suggestion of the woman had reminded him of the necessity of being on his guard.

"Here is the gentleman, Sir."—And the lady bolted out of the room, as she closed the door upon the person thus admitted. This was a strong athletic man of middle age, dressed in a plain suit of clothes, booted, and very much splashed with mud, and who was, as the landlady had stated, "very dark;" and although diffident of committing herself on the score of personal beauty, he was altogether a very good looking man of his apparent years, and calm and commanding in his manner and deportment.

Percy stared at him with unfeigned astonishment—slightly bowed in return to a very courteous bend of the body on the part of the stranger—and addressed him, by observing, that "there must be some mistake, which, perhaps, the gentleman could explain."

"I trust there may be, my Lord—but if you will allow me to take a seat, we may the sooner arrive at the means of ascertaining it."

Percy was too courteous by nature, to decline the proposition coming from a guest, though an

uninvited one; and having pointed to a chair, and seated himself, he again demanded the object of the gentleman's visit.

He seemed fated, on this day, to receive nothing in the shape of direct answers to his questions. His visitor, instead of replying to him, held out his hands towards the fire, and observed, that "it was a sharp night."

"Very," was all the notice Percy took of this shrewd observation.

"A comfortable house this, my Lord."

"A mad-house, I think rather," cried Percy impatiently.—"You are under some delusion, Sir, practised upon you by these people. I am no Lord, nor any thing in the shape of a Lord."

"We are not going to press that point, my good Sir—let that pass."

"By Heavens! Sir, I will suffer nothing to pass, until you inform me who you are, and what is your business here."

"Be pacified, my good Sir. I am fully acquainted with every thing—and you shall be duly informed in turn.—Pray—did you travel all the way from town alone?"

"And why not?"

"You do not answer my question."

"You have not answered mine, Sir."

"Well—we'll let that pass—I have no intention or wish to irritate you."

"Irritate me—you are going near to do so, and by—Sir—" and Percy rose from his chair, and threw it with a jerk behind him, as he stood, facing his guest with a countenance little characteristic of philosophical forbearance.

The gentleman, however, moved not from his seat, nor appeared to be in the least ruffled in his manner by the violence of his host. He fixed his eyes, however, steadily upon him, and with the most perfect *sang froid*, asked him, if he was "acquainted with this part of the country?"

Percy appeared petrified with astonishment at this novel sort of hardihood, and almost awed by it—but shaking off this momentary impression, he demanded fiercely, "What his acquaintance with the neighbourhood had to do with an intrusion, the most unwarrantable he had ever experienced?"

"You had an object, it is to be presumed, in coming here," was the calm and sober reply.

"This is intolerable," cried Percy, and rang the bell with violence. It remained unanswered, and the countenance of the stranger bespoke his conviction that it would be so.

"I wish, Sir," said he, "I could prevail upon you to be calm—and afford me simple answers to the few questions I feel it to be my duty to put to you."

"Are you Grand Inquisitor?" demanded Percy as fiercely as contemptuously.

"I am anything you choose to fancy me," replied the other, "if you will take it quietly."

"Take—take what quietly?"

"The assistance I am ready to afford you—you need not ring the bell—I have given orders that no one shall approach."

"You—you give orders respecting me—and who the Devil are you, Sir, that dare take such a liberty with ——"

"Be calm—be calm, my Lord—it will not do."

"By Heavens! but this shall," and he seized the stranger by the collar, and began to drag him towards the door, when, by a skilful turn of the

arm, the other, who had risen from his seat, threw him off to a distance, and deliberately striking his foot upon the floor, two stout ruffian-like fellows walked into the room, and looked towards the stranger, as if for orders.

Percy now rushed towards the fire-place, in order to seize the poker, which he had resigned upon the stranger's entrance—but he was quickly interrupted in his passage, by the two myrmidons, who most dexterously pinioned him, and held him *in duresse* before the placid gentleman, who waited until Percy had exhausted all his denunciations against so audacious and outrageous an attempt upon his person and liberty.

"You will now, perhaps, condescend to hear reason," continued the placid gentleman, familiarly stirring the fire; "you ought to know that this violence will produce no effect upon me—and, therefore, ——"

"Violence!—dare you, who have, in defiance of the rules of society, as well as the laws of the land, violated the sanctuary of my apartment, and —and—and—dare you, ruffian as you are, reproach me with violence?"

" I came not to reproach you."

" Why the Devil did you come at all?—Who sent for you?—Who are you?—Unhand me, rascals, or by Heavens ——" and by a sudden effort, he disengaged himself from their grasp, laid one sprawling at his feet, and, throwing the other to a distance, again seized the stranger by the collar, and appeared determined to prevent his former manœuvre, by seizing his right arm.

" Now, Sir—leave this room instantly, or inform me, what is the meaning of this daring outrage."——But before he could receive an answer, the two men had him again safe in their grasp behind.

The stranger quietly adjusted his stock and shirt collar, which had been somewhat dèranged in the struggle—and then resuming his seat, attended with the most imperturbable gravity to the ravings and execrations of Percy, who divided the eloquence of his indignation among the various parties and witnesses of the scene, who now appeared at the door, and among whom stood conspicuous mine host in his hat and boots, and his

"nervous" wife clinging to him for support. At length, being exhausted, having no new epithets to dignify, or give effect to the aspirations of his wrath—or, perhaps, finding how ineffectual this mode of proceeding had hitherto been, he condescended to change his mode of attack, or rather, on this occasion, his mode of defence.

"Pray, Sir," said he, addressing himself to the stranger, "may I take the liberty of asking how long it is your pleasure to continue this frolic?—or ——"

"If you will be reasonable, and attend to me, I will order your release—but ——"

"By what authority, let me first know, do you presume to detain me?"

"That must be a subject of future consideration—my people shall retire, if you will pledge yourself to sit peaceably in your chair,—and conduct yourself rationally!"

"What the Devil, Sir, do you take me for a madman?"

Here a groan of horror was raised from the domestic crowd about the door.

"My good people, retire, if you please," said the stranger; "I will trust to the honor of this young nobleman, to fulfil the conditions upon which I consent to release him—Bond and Burt, —you may go—but be within call."

Percy stood at liberty—but doubtful in what manner to use it—the room was cleared, and again he was face to face with his persecutor.

He threw himself into a chair, almost breathless with agitation—and doubtful of the very nature of his feelings.—At length looking up, and seeing his opposite neighbour's eyes fixed upon him, with a mild but steady gaze, he broke the silence.

"Sir! there is something so extraordinary in your present mode of proceeding—it is apparently so thoroughly digested and organised, that I am compelled to believe, you are labouring under some egregious mistake."

"It is on that account, that I wish to satisfy myself on a few necessary points, to which I have, in vain, laboured to bring you."

"You prove yourself to be in one essential error, Sir, in honoring me with a title, to which I

have no claim—and this is sufficient—or ought to be sufficient, to satisfy you, that, however induced, you have been guilty of an outrage, for which it will be difficult, even on the score of misinformation, to make me a just and proper atonement."

"Let that pass, my good Sir—if you will not allow me to say my Lord—you appear to be in a calmer state of mind."

"What can I do, unarmed, surrounded by ruffians, and a household at your command?"

"I am not censuring the calmness of mind which it has been my object from the moment of my arrival to effect—on the contrary, I only wait till you are disposed to attend to what I have to say."

"All I wish to know may be told in two words—Who are you—and what possible business can you have with me?"

"You are not aware of the difficulty which may attend a direct answer to either of your questions!"

"Your name?"

"You ought to know, my Lord."

"Are you crazy, man—have I not told you, over and over again, that I am no Lord—and in this obviously lies the foundation of your whole error—if you really are not a wilful aggressor."

"Alas! my good young gentleman—*there* certainly the delusion does rest—but until you allow me to put things in my own way, we shall only traverse in a circle."

"You are a most extraordinary person,"—and Percy almost laughed at the curious predicament in which he was thrown by the persevering tenacity of his visitor. "Surely, Sir—you must have a name—this even might afford some clew."

"Do you entertain no particular apprehension—no strong prejudice against certain names?" asked the stranger with earnest inquisitiveness.

"No, on my honor—there is indeed one, against which I have reason to feel some degree of prejudice."

"I thought so."

"But that can have no connection with yours."

"And why not?"

"Because it is out of the question that you

should know anything of the person to whom it belongs."

"That is as it may be—you have probably made some inquiries respecting him since your arrival at this house."

"You seem, Sir, to be well acquainted with my movements," cried Percy somewhat sternly.

"I am right, then."

"I have nothing to conceal—I certainly wished to ascertain some facts respecting a scoundrel, whom I have reason to suspect of designs hostile to the peace of an unfortunate young woman, already in his power."

"Humph!—and your object is to rescue her?"

"Which I will do, at the hazard of my life," replied Percy, with energy.

"You are acquainted with her place of abode?"

"I am, Sir—and should have reached it ere this—but that they tell me the roads are scarcely practicable in this dark night."

"Is the lady detained against her will?"

"She is, I fear, unconscious of her situation,

and may the more easily become the dupe of his designs."

"She is under restraint, then?"

"She is confined, Sir, in this immediate neighbourhood."

"Under ——"

"Under Doctor Beekerdyke."

"Indeed—and it is against this unfortunate Doctor Beekerdyke that your vengeance has been excited?"

"No such thing."

"You mentioned the prejudice you entertained against the person who detained this young lady."

"You mistake me, Sir—as you appear to mistake every thing else—I really wish you would no longer force yourself upon me—I have much to reflect upon—much to arrange, and cannot submit ——"

"A few moments longer—be assured I have only your interests in view."

"What can you know of, or have to do with my interests?"

"More, perhaps, than you are aware of—this Doctor Beekerdyke ——"

"Do you know him?"

"Perfectly—he can have no intention of injuring you—and, yet it appears he was the first object of your inquiry here—and, from your conversation, I infer the prime object of your vengeance."

"Psha!"

"Who, then, is the person whom you so emphatically denounced only a few minutes ago?"

Percy stared at his questioner—and thrusting his hands in his pockets, stretched out his legs —and, with a smile that partook pretty equally of drollery and contempt, said,

"Upon my soul, Sir, this is the most ridiculous scene I ever witnessed—here you, a perfect stranger to me—force yourself into my presence against my will—commit an assault upon my person—get yourself backed by a set of mercenary hirelings—grant me liberty upon conditions, and at length sit down, quietly and sedately, to cross-question me upon my own private affairs, as if you were legally invested with the power of

directing a verdict of life and death against me. Have you," and Percy drew himself up, and assumed a graver tone, "have you no apprehension of future responsibility, or do you calculate upon having the odds thus always in your favour?"

"I calculate upon your submission, if I am compelled to persevere in strong measures, and upon your pardon, if they shall be found unnecessary."

"Will you speak without riddles?—again I ask a plain question—Who are you—what have you to do with me?"

"I may, perhaps, venture now to answer more directly to your questions—I am that very Doctor Beekerdyke whom you profess to seek."

"Profess!" and Percy started from his chair to approach the doctor, who threw out his arms to keep him off.

"Nay, nay—if you do not keep your seat—if you are not calm, I shall summon assistance."

"What can you mean?" cried Percy, as he literally obeyed the doctor's injunctions.

"I mean, Sir—although I confess part of

your conversation has staggered me, that in your present state, you must be aware that there was a motive—an object in sending you down to my house."

"Unquestionably—and one of vital importance—why—why did you not explain who you were at once, and thus have saved yourself and me from a scene, which is still altogether inexplicable to me, unless you mistook me for a patient instead of a visitor?" and Percy laughed at the conceit.

"Very good!" returned the doctor, as he applied his handkerchief to his face, and affected to blow his nose! "We shall sooner come to an understanding, if you will allow me to proceed in my old-fashioned way, my good Sir.—Now, you do not—that is, you have no desire to pass for—that is, to represent the Earl of Harweden?"

"I see," said Percy, as he drew his chair towards the doctor, "I see that you are acquainted with more of this affair than I was led to believe—I certainly do represent my Lord Harweden."

"And the carriage below ——"

"Is his."

"His arms, I see, are upon the pannels."

"Of course."

"It was not your intention to pass for my Lord Harweden?"

"Sir!" exclaimed Percy, starting again from his chair, "do you take me for an impostor—a ——"

"Pray, be patient, and sit down—be assured I mean no offence—I was prepared to expect you."

"To expect me, Sir!—then," added Percy laughing, "you must be a conjuror, or an adept in the black art; for, by all that is good, I never dreamed of the visit four-and-twenty hours ago."

"Indeed!" responded the other drily; "pray, Sir, are you acquainted—now, I entreat you not to be offended at the question—do you know Mr—Mr Radcliffe?"

"Radcliffe—Radcliffe—no—I have heard the name in the north country—but I can claim no acquaintance with any individual who bears it."

"That is very strange!" said the doctor, in an under tone.

"And why strange, doctor?"

"Allow me to put another question to you—I do not, believe me, purpose to be impertinent or inquisitive—What is the name of the person concerning whom you made certain inquiries of the people of the house, and against whom it appears, from your subsequent conversation, you entertain some prejudice?"

"Dossiter is the man's name—There are two of them," added he, smiling, "yet unhanged—father and son." The doctor remained absorbed in thought for some time. "I fear," at length he said, "there is more here than meets the ear."—Then turning round to Percy, whom he regarded with even deeper attention than before, "Have you any objection to my asking a few questions of the landlord or waiter of the house?"

"None," replied Percy, laughing—"but it would suit me better, if I could get you into a train of answering rather than putting questions," and he rose to ring the bell.

"Perhaps not."

Mine host, who had evidently been within immediate call, answered the bell in person.

"Pray, landlord," asked the doctor, "was the young gentleman, who arrived here this afternoon in a chaise and four from my house, the same who departed in the mail for London in the evening?"

"The same, Sir."

"You are positive?"

"I can swear it, Sir—for he never left the bar until the coach was ready to start."

"Had you any opportunity of hearing his name?"

"My man saw it on his boots, which he had taken off to be cleaned."

"What was it?"

"A queer one—but—I'll ask the man," and he retired to do so.

"That man seems more rational—he was either muddled with liquor—or a candidate for your establishment, my good doctor, a few hours ago."

"I think he was—and some others, too, perhaps—but here he is."

"It was Dorchester, Boots says, Sir—or something like it."

"I thought so!" exclaimed Percy.

"That will do—you may go"—said the doc-

tor; and the landlord, after having shewn some symptoms of surprise at finding him and his supposed patient quietly conversing together, left the room.

The doctor sat silent for a few seconds.

"Here is some roguery!" at length he exclaimed, "and I have—but—allow me first to ask you, Sir, if this person has any other name besides that of Dorchester?"

"Dossiter is the name—he was christened Clarendon."

"Clarendon!—that is the family name of Lord Harweden, is it not?"

"It is—he is his Lordship's godson."

"What atonement shall I make to you, Sir," cried Doctor Beekerdyke, as he rose from his chair—"for having submitted to become an instrument in carrying on some intrigue, which it is impossible for me at this moment to fathom or unravel, and thus subjected you to impertinence and insult, which I ought to have detected after the exchange of a few words with you?"

Percy, who had no gall in his composition, and whose passions were, in their most fiery exalta-

tion, capable of being quenched by a single word of conciliation—had, before this apology was made, nearly forgotten that he had any ground of quarrel with the intruder—and was as ready to listen now, as he had previously determined only to be heard.

The doctor then explained that he had now for the first time heard the name of Dossiter—that, under the name of Radcliffe, this person had been the agent in the whole affair, and, with every appearance of sympathy and tenderness, had provided an asylum under his roof for a young relation, whose mind, he said, had for some time been unsettled, and who required to be secluded from her family and connections—that he had desired no expense might be spared in providing every comfort and accommodation for her, consistent with close confinement, and restriction against the admission of every description of visitor. "There certainly was an occurrence," continued the doctor, "which staggered me for a moment; but it was so plausibly accounted for, that I was lulled into security. About ten o'clock this morning, a despatch arrived express from London, addressed to this Mr

Radcliffe, at my house, which appeared for a moment to overwhelm him—but soon rallying his spirits, he requested to speak with me in private, and, in a manner that banished all suspicion, informed me, that he had just received information, which would render a farther appeal to my services necessary—that a near relation of the young lady—unhappily a victim also to the family calamity, although not absolutely under restraint, had, by some unaccountable means, been made acquainted with the place of her retreat, and had been missed by his friends soon after the expression of his determination to seek her there—that this person who, in his aberrations of intellect, supposed himself to be a man of rank—to whom he stood in some degree of relationship—would probably make his appearance with all the appendages of nobility, as he was known actually to have given orders to his coachmaker to emblazon the pannels of his carriage with the armorial bearings of the Earl of Harweden. He added, further, that he was fully authorized by the trustees of this gentleman, acting under the authority of the Chancellor, to commit him to his care and custody, until proper

measures should be taken to restore him to his friends in London."

Now, instead of troubling the reader with the natural expression of indignation, at such a premeditated outrage upon his person, which may naturally be supposed to have been called forth on the part of Percy, we—who are averse to all unnecessary mysteries—will take the trouble of turning "*la medaille*," in order to unravel this intrigue, the motive and tendency of which is too obvious for the dullest reader to miss as he peruses the narrative.

When Clement Dossiter found open war declared by the Earl, and that Percy Mallory was an avowed party to it, he entertained very little doubt that some active share in the prompt measures necessary to be pursued would be allotted to him—and knowing how inconvenient, if not fatal, to the measures carrying on in the north, would be the interposition or interference of a hot-headed young man, he devoted himself to the contrivance of certain means of counteraction, which he was too experienced a general not always to have at his command.

It may be easily supposed that a man, the success of whose schemes, and the guarantee of whose safety depended solely upon the mastery which he maintained over Lord Harweden, would take care to place about his Lordship's person, such spies and dependants as might be ready to "do his bidding," whenever the exigency of the case required his interference; and that, at all times, he was fully aware of what was going forward in the interior cabinet of a government, of which he truly considered himself prime minister.

He had been, indeed, surprised to discover Percy Mallory in confidential intercourse with his Lordship in the most critical moment of his career. Having been in constant attendance, for several hours, upon the dying young man in whose fate he was so deeply interested—the information, which, it may be supposed, did not occur to his agents as being of any moment, had not reached him—and he, very unequivocally, betrayed, upon his entering Lord Harweden's library, the disappointment he experienced in having his various schemes to keep the parties apart, frustrated in such a moment. But his resolution was taken as

soon almost as the possible inferences from such an event were duly deduced and calculated.

When he left Percy and his Lordship, he hastily descended to give directions to his inferior agents—the principal of which, it may be supposed, was Lord Harweden's own *confidential gentleman.* Every word and every action were now scrupulously watched, and the commission of Percy was of course immediately communicated to the worthy lawyer, who took his measures accordingly.

To attempt any overt act of violence to impede the journey altogether, was too hazardous to be thought of—even if the worthy Mr Dossiter had not felt himself more *au fait* in the safer walk of subtlety and intrigue. He conceived that his son had already so much the start of the Earl's agent, that the object to be attained would probably be secured before his arrival on the scene of action—but it was the lawyer's policy always to guard against contingencies, and although he had received letters on the previous day, announcing the success of all his son's measures up to a certain point, there yet remained something to be

done, and Fortune was too notorious a jilt to be left to herself, when her services could more certainly be ensured by removing all possible temptations out of her way.

What fairer field could then have opened itself to a man of Mr Dossiter's ingenious turn of mind, than the quiet incarceration of the only person who could possibly endanger his plans by being at liberty—and calculating upon certain little irritable points, and a certain impetuosity of disposition, which he had not failed to mark in the individual to be practised upon, he anticipated what had nearly come to pass, that sufficient symptoms might present themselves to warrant any mad doctor in the kingdom in pursuing measures of coercion for a period sufficiently long to answer his purpose.

His instructions were accordingly forwarded by a hasty express, as soon as my Lord's gentleman could retire with the necessary information from the corner, where he had taken his station according to orders. His Lordship's subsequent attack was considered propitious in proportion as it seemed likely to postpone Percy's journey—and

in the stronger alternative of its proving fatal, as he knew himself to be named executor to his Lordship's will, which he could not yet have had an opportunity of altering, he would thus be in possession of the means of setting his enemies—or the family of his Lordship—at defiance, with respect to all past transactions.

He was in the house at the moment of Percy's departure, and the latter, in the full flow of feelings awakened by the scene he had witnessed, was easily induced to part with the box committed to his charge by Lord Harweden, and which his Lordship's attendant, who took it from him, immediately conveyed to Dossiter. This man was prepared—had Percy recollected to ask him for it—to swear it was safely deposited in the seat of the carriage—or if necessary, that it had been lost—or stolen—or any thing but at hand.

How narrowly Percy escaped a strait-waistcoat, and a dark room, where every expression of indignant feeling would only have tended to confirm the justice of the discipline imposed upon him—we have already seen—and although the conviction, that Dr Beekerdyke was no party to the

atrocious measures contemplated against him, served to temper the manner of expressing his resentment, he approached, perhaps, more nearly to the state which had before been imputed to him, when he vowed his determination of inflicting the most exemplary punishment upon the delinquents, both father and son.

He now entered upon such explanations as were necessary with respect to the measures proposed by Lord Harweden, for the security of his daughter.

"No marriage," said Percy, "can possibly have taken place in your house, without your knowledge, Dr Beekerdyke?"

"Not in my house, certainly, but ——"

"She has had no means of leaving it, I conclude?"

"None—but it might have taken place previously."

"How can that be, my good Sir—if she has been two years under your care?"

"Two years!—not two days ——"

"Sir!"—and Percy repeated his words.

"She has not been twelve hours under my

charge," replied the doctor; and from the manner in which the reply was given, an indifferent observer might have traced something like a suspicion, that he had been rather too hasty in his conclusions with respect to the sanity of his companion.

The more the subject was canvassed, the less light appeared to be thrown upon it. The doctor had received no female patient under his roof for the last five years.—Percy insisted, that Lord Harweden had asserted, that his daughter had been there for a year and half at least, if not two years.—The opinion of the one was every moment approaching to a conviction, that he might still be entitled to consider his opposite neighbour in the light of a legitimate patient—whilst that of the other became gradually tinctured with a suspicion, that the doctor was, somehow or other, endeavouring to make him his dupe.—Fortunately, before these smouldering embers had time to burst out into a flame, a proposition, made by Percy, for a meeting with the lady herself, was favourably met by the doctor, who seemed pleased to have an opportunity afforded him of

deliberating on the subject alone; and by a slight turn of his countenance, might have been suspected of inferring, that Percy would then be more immediately in his power, should his suspicions, which were again fearfully awakened, prove to be well founded.—Peaceable preliminaries, however, being thus far adjusted, they parted for the night; and Percy most gladly resumed his purpose of seeking repose in bed—having first pledged himself to be at Waterbury, by eight o'clock, on the succeeding morning.

The landlord, who was waiting for his cue below stairs, received the doctor in a room behind the bar, and anxiously inquired after the state of the patient, and whether it would not be expedient to retain, during the night, the two keepers who had accompanied him from Waterbury, in order to prevent, or guard against any return of the paroxysms, which he had, in his wisdom, deemed sufficient to warrant his hasty summons of professional aid. But Dr Beekerdyke, whatever might be his internal misgivings in consequence of the latter part of his conversation with Percy, assured Boniface that there was no

ground of apprehension—and that the whole affair had turned out to be a false alarm.

Matters being thus adjusted, the doctor and his myrmidons remounted their horses, and left the inn in a state of tranquillity very different from that in which they had found it—and although, from what had fallen from the former in his short conversation behind the bar, Percy was effectually degraded from his supposed nobility, the landlady, who had previously been nearly scared out of her own senses, by her apprehension of her guest being fairly out of his—now declared that she should never have suspected "any thing of the kind in such a nice spoken sort of gentleman, if her booby of a husband hadn't put it into her head—besides," added she, "there is a good dinner, and a bottle, or perhaps two, of good wine, clean lost out of the bill, besides the chance of breaking your own neck, or Smiler's knees, over Weirsplash Common in the dark, and all owing to your addle-pated conundrums."

CHAPTER V.

PERCY endeavoured to compose himself to sleep—but a train of intrusive meditation kept him wide awake. He turned from one side to the other with as little success, for the current of his thoughts became more intricate and confused, in a state between sleeping and waking. He heard twelve o'clock strike.—He was awakened from a few minutes doze, by a similar annunciation of one—he was broad awake when it struck two.—He left his bed—turned down the clothes according to the advice of Dr Franklin—paced his room for five minutes, and then turned in again, purposing to draw a veil over all the subjects on which he had been dwelling—to count one hundred in succession—to fancy corn-fields waving under a summer breeze—or the regular

influx of a calm unruffled sea upon a smooth sandy shore. He had almost lost sight of both corn-field and ripple, and nearly forgotten to count, and, what was much more to the purpose, had almost forgotten himself, when he lost all the ground he had gained, and was newly roused, by hearing some movement under his chamber-window, and in the dead silence of the night, clearly distinguished the whispering of voices, which were the more distinctly heard, from the circumstance of the chamber-maid's neglect, in having left part of the window open, which the drawn curtain had concealed.

He bolted upright in the bed. He knew little about inns or public houses of entertainment, but he had heard more of them—and whispering at an hour when, by common consent, it was supposed, that all honest people were agreed in taking their sleep, was, in itself, a fair ground of suspicion, that the wakers were engaged in some design against the peace or property of the sleepers. He, therefore, stole out of bed, and approached the window—but the night, or rather morning, was too dark to afford the smallest clew, as far

as vision was concerned, to what was passing even in his immediate neighbourhood. The noise he had made in rising had probably given an alarm, for the voices had ceased, and not a footfall was to be heard.

He could not be deceived—or deluded by a dream, for he had heard the whispers quickly passing, for several seconds, after he had risen in his bed. The room was at the back part of the premises—and, as far as he was concerned, they might have opened upon the ocean, for not an object was to be discerned—there being neither moon nor star above—nor even a living rush-light to throw its stinted glimmer through a curtain or a casement in his neighbourhood.

Satisfied that something, to which darkness was necessary, was in agitation, and, having no further motive to drive out of his mind the recollection of past or passing events, the association of the Dossiters, with every thing that was dark and suspicious, naturally suggested to him a notion, that, in some way or other, they, or one of them, at least, must be concerned in what was going forward.

In a moment, it flashed upon him, that the young man had returned for the purpose of regaining possession of the blue box, which, it was clear, must be of the utmost importance to the parties concerned, from the hurried view he had caught of the nature of part, at least, of its contents. Resolved not to lose what might be even of still greater value to Lord Harweden and his daughter, his first step was to counteract the scheme if possible—and, hastily slipping on his dressing-gown, he left the chamber, and trusted to skill or instinct to ascertain the sitting-room, in which he had left the box, denouncing himself as a block-head, as he groped his way along the passages, for having been guilty of the neglect of leaving it behind him when he went to bed.

He had to pass several small flights of steps, ascending at one moment—descending at another—and, it must be confessed, his notions of the topography of the mansion became more and more confused, as he advanced. He had tried several doors, some of which proved to be locked—and others, which opened at his command, opposed perils in the shape of pails, or brooms, or such

" like household gear," from which a rapid retreat only could ensure safety to his unprotected legs, or projected hands.

At length, a door yielded to his touch, which seemed, from its position, as well as he could ascertain it, to answer to the description of that, within which he had passed the previous evening —and he advanced, cautiously feeling his way— when, meeting with no impediment, he proceeded more confidently—guarding himself by a free sweep of his arms in advance, until he received a sudden shock from the cumbrous post of a bedstead, which had eluded his left hand, but against which his right hand and his body, in the same moment, came in rude contact. He staggered, and, in the intuitive impulse to check his fall, caught at the invisible object of his disaster—but, grasping the curtain in its stead, brought down the rod and half the tester, with a tremendous crash, upon him, as he fell prostrate on the ground.

" Are the devils in hell broke loose ?" bellowed a man's voice, half choked with anger and affright, and which seemed to have suffered in the general wreck. " Who are you—and what are you ?—by

Jove! I'll pepper you for this—or ——" and the clatter of bells, in a distant part of the house, shewed, that the tenant of the bed still retained the use of his hands.

"Why don't you speak, and be ——"

"Speak!"—exclaimed Percy—"I am struck dumb—for Heaven's sake! Sir—who are you?—and ——"

"Confound the fellow's impudence—here have you come to murder or plunder me in my very bed-room—and to put interrogatories to a—— By Jove! you are the most impudent——Stand off!"—for Percy had contrived to extricate himself from the wrecks of the bed, and appeared to be approaching the speaker—"stand off—I am armed—Curse the fellow, where are my pistols?" —Ring, ring, pealed the bell—"By Jove! scoundrel—I'll hang you if I can't shoot you"—and one bell-rope broke in his hand—whilst the other was pealing without cessation.

"Dare I trust my ears in this chaos—surely, surely, it is Mr Rycott's voice."

"So, so—you've tracked me, have you?—you had marked me down—but by Jove! ——" but

at this moment, the landlord and two or three servants in their shirts, armed with the first weapon, or utensil of offence or defence, they could lay their hands upon, rushed into the room, and checked the indignant speaker, before he had completed his denunciation. The ostler, who was less in an undress than his companions, having been up to attend some coach, armed with a pitchfork—peered over the shoulders of his master, and holding up his opened lanthorn above his head, afforded the only light that could be thrown over this most extraordinary scene.

"Lord, Lord—if it ben't the mad Lord, broke loose!"

When the landlord perceived Percy in his loose wrapper, standing amid the ruin he had created—staring upon the bed, and tearing away the fragments, which hid the object, he was so anxious to ascertain, from his view, he no longer hesitated in recurring to his former opinion, respecting that young gentleman, and, with that rapidity of thought, which, in the twinkling of an eye, can embody inferences, which it would occupy hours to draw at full length, satisfied himself, that Dr

Beekerdyke had some concealed motive for leaving a madman upon his hands for that night—all the assurances of his fearful demeanour—all the guarantees against accidents or escapes, were now clearly forfeited, and he scarcely knew against which to vent his execrations and vengeance most emphatically, the doctor or the patient. The latter, however, was present—the means were at hand, and the position of Percy gave him every advantage he could desire.—Without hesitating a moment—or one tenth part of the time we have been talking about it—he dashed forward, calling upon his attendants to follow—and being a stout muscular fellow, succeeded in seizing Percy's arms, and throwing him upon the ground, on which he was securely pinioned by the knees and hands of two brawny assistants—whilst the ostler, who was the most vociferous, but least warlike, of the party, stood over him with his elevated pitchfork—and displayed his humbled position by the light of his lanthorn.

Percy, in vain, struggled—and as vainly remonstrated. The landlord was roaring for his wife and further aid—in order that he might be

at liberty to make a second excursion to Waterbury for the doctor and a strait-waistcoat—"For, d—e," added he, "my Lordly spark, if you slip through my fingers again, without the doctor's dressing."

The only injured person was the only person who could not make himself heard amidst this din of war, and when the reader is informed, if he be not already informed, that this was no other than Mr Rycott himself, he will not be surprised that the worthy gentleman did not bear this inattention to his dignity, with any commendable portion of philosophy or endurance. He had extricated himself from the wreck of the tester, without deriving the smallest external aid from the force he had summoned to it—and was sitting upright in the bed, literally foaming at the mouth, to command silence—or, at least, a sufficient cessation of the uproar to exercise his right prescriptive to issue his commands upon the occasion. He was no more regarded than if he had been a part or portion of the bed furniture, which hung in tatters about his ears—nor, indeed, so much, for mine host had, in a parenthesis, despatched a flying

oath upon the demolisher of his wife's "best moreen bed!" whilst to the ravings of its tenant he was, or pretended to be, entirely deaf.

Mr Rycott—could he have drawn the attention of the party to himself—might have awakened their suspicions, that, when one strait-waistcoat was sent for, it might save future trouble to provide two—for, by this time, he had hurled his night-cap, which consisted of several folds of fleecy hosiery, web-flannel, with lappets, and silk fillets, at the most conspicuous object, namely, the lanthorn, in order to draw attention to himself—but he missed his shot, and the volley with which it was accompanied was unheard or unnoticed.

Several inmates, alarmed out of their sleep, were now added to the original groupe—and the increased clamour of inquiries, replies, and rejoinders, together with the chorus of expedients to secure a madman, who was of course a common enemy, rendered the case of Mr Rycott still more desperate.

At length, after despatching every thing that could be fabricated into a missive, at the heads of

the struggling parties on the floor, he could hold no longer, and kicking off the clothes from the bed, was about to leap among the combatants, when the landlady entered at the door, who, uttering a scream which, either from being in *alto*, and thus contradistinguished from the general bass accompaniment, or from being familiar to certain ears in the assembly, at once succeeded in doing that which poor Mr Rycott had exhausted his lungs in vainly attempting.

"Ar'nt you ashamed of yourself," she bawled out to Mr Rycott—"Ar'nt you ashamed of yourself before the other sect?—turn him into bed—Sam—I say, Sam—not a maid shall enter the room if ——"

There was a pause for Rycott to cut in, which he did not fail to profit by—"Let any of your rascals approach me, Madam, and, by Jove! they shall perish,"—and he advanced towards the heat of the fray, with a long fragment of the bed-tester which he had snatched from the ground—"Go, woman," turning round indignantly, "go—and send my servant and Mr Schwartz—a scoundrel, he must sleep like a top." The lady was not, how-

ever, so submissive. She kept her word respecting the maidens, whom she despatched several ways for more help; but having formed a sudden alliance with two or three of the guests, who had hitherto taken no active part in what was going forward, but who were willing, either from a love of mischief, or for the purpose of bringing matters to a crisis, to afford their assistance to her, she contrived to drag the counterpane from the bed, and aided by the coalition, to throw it over the whole person of Mr Rycott, and by twisting and turning it, to involve him in such close folds, that not only could he not move an arm or a leg, but his very voice was denied the privilege of giving vent to his rage and indignation. Fortunately, however, for him, in this crisis of his fate, his faithful servant Poole entered, followed by Michael Schwartz, with a night-cap on his head, which towered like a pyramid above his swarthy visage, and was bound with an old snuffy silk pocket-handkerchief. He held up his small-clothes, which were made, it is to be presumed, to be sustained by braces—in one hand, under the arm of which he carried a large square mahogany case—whilst in his other he grasped

several small phials, evidently filled with medicine—which the sudden summons of the Squire had suggested to him might be called for—if not necessary from some sudden illness.

"Ver de deifel," looking around him aghast, at the passing scene, "Ver de deifel ees de Squeere!" and at the moment Mr Rycott, who recognized the voice of a friend at hand, made a desperate effort to escape suffocation, and overturning the landlady, involved the unprepared Michael Schwartz, medicine-case, bottles, phials, and all, in one common ruin—extricating himself from his mummy folds only to share the effects of his successful exertions.

By this time Poole had discovered and recognized the face of Percy, though disfigured by blood, more amply contributed by the wounds he had inflicted than by those he had received. He as plainly saw that the brutality of his assailants—whom it was impossible to shake off single-handed—would be restrained by no respect of persons, and in a moment became a principal in the war, by dashing in amongst them, right and left, without inquiring into the cause of the contest; and,

before they could rise to unite their force against him, had raised Percy fairly on his legs. No longer doubtful of victory when he saw who was his ally, Percy seized upon a staff which had fallen from the hands of one of the assailants, and stood upon the defensive, after giving due notice of his determination to fell the first man who should presume to advance upon him. But Poole, who had just stepped behind him, now advanced, and presenting him with a pistol—cocked another which he held in his hand, and, without further ceremony, informed the opposite party, who still evinced a spirit of hostility, and a resolution to secure the "mad Lord"—"that if they did not leave his master's chamber—'every man John,' before he could count twenty, he and his young master," pointing to Percy, "who was no more mad than himself, would take the chance of sending four slugs each into as many of their stomachers as might be ready to receive them!"

This was what may be justly termed a decisive step—and like decision upon all occasions of difficulty or emergency, proved to be effectual—for the landlady—whether considering herself the last

ter portion of the man John her husband, conceived herself included in Mr Poole's denunciation—or whether the condition she found herself in from the large complement of Mr Rycott's medicine-chest, which had fallen to her share, impelled her to retire, certain it is, after a scream, which might be construed to arise either from modesty, alarm, or nausea, she sounded a retreat—and insisted upon her husband's accompanying her. The rest followed of course—but if the reader supposes that the retreat was conducted in that especial and orderly manner, which is said to contribute as much to the character of a general as a victory gained, he labours under an error from which we are bound to relieve him. The first part, indeed, was of a very rapid nature—that is, from the immediate muzzles of the hand-artillery—but as these were dropped, in token of the amnesty implied, in case of ready obedience, the retreating party resumed the valour of their tongues, unmindful of an enemy on their flank, who had entered into no conditions, and would have disdained to give or take any whilst his commands were even in suspense. The neutrals had escaped even

before the landlady had taken possession of the pass at the door, having wisely resolved, after receiving two or three cuffs from Mr Rycott, that they "were only lodgers." That gentleman, therefore, having cleared his part of the field, and being still intent on vengeance for such daring and hitherto unexplained insults upon his dignity, most effectively seconded the lady's shrill summons to her husband, by applying, with all his might, the flat side of the frame work of the valance, with which he had again armed himself, to such parts of the retreating enemy as lay more particularly open and exposed to his assault, thus throwing the *corps d'elite* into confusion—the regular armed reserve followed close upon their heels, and the door was finally closed upon the discomfited invaders, who were clamorous in their threats and execrations in the precise ratio of their loss of means to render them effectual.

Poole had fortunately preserved the candle which he had brought with him, so that the victorious party, thus strangely congregated together, were enabled—after securing the key of the door —on the inside—to avail themselves of all the

advantages, which the possession of the field of battle gave them. There were fortunately no dead to bury—and the wounds inflicted upon Mr Rycott were more on the spirit than in the flesh. He was carefully replaced in his bed, by Schwartz and his companions, and although he had most manfully exerted himself in the fray, without reference to his physical disqualifications, he was no sooner at liberty to reflect upon his own case, than he summoned forth all the specifics, against the ill effects of muscular exertion, increased pulsation—temporal throbbings, and pectoral spasms, which could be extracted from the wreck of Michael Schwartz's medicine-chest.

Percy had escaped with a few bruises which were little heeded, in the conviction, that he had—although not in the true Christian spirit—given more than he had received, and was, consequently, the more anxious to come to an explanation with his *ci-devant* father, upon the extraordinary circumstance of their meeting—and of the causes which had furnished the materials for it.

It appeared that Mr Rycott, upon receiving

Percy's account of the discovery of his son, in the person of Lord Brandon, had resolved upon a journey to London, in order to investigate this mysterious affair, and in the hope that the young man might yet recover, and by a course of discipline, under his own especial care, be rendered what Percy had become—as he affirmed—under a similar mode of training. He had arrived the previous evening at the inn, and being much fatigued by a long day's journey, had immediately ordered a bed to be warmed—bathed his feet, taken a warm mess, and retired for the purpose of enjoying a long night's rest—previous to the journey of the succeeding day. How far he accomplished his object we have seen—but as his indignation had been altogether centred and directed, in the latter part of the transaction, against the assailants of Percy, our young friend escaped the weight of his displeasure, which would naturally have fallen upon him, had the affair ended in the unseasonable, however unintentional, interruption of so important a night's rest.

It was agreed on all hands, that the more detailed explanation of events on either side should

be postponed until the morning; but the point was not finally carried, owing to the questions which arose, and which Mr Rycott insisted upon having answered in his own way, until Schwartz settled the business, by declaring he would not answer for his patient's being able to move all the next day, unless he slept off the effects of the composing draught, which he had just administered.

CHAPTER VI.

Some caution was now necessary in order to secure a safe retreat—and fortunately for the garrison, about to be abandoned by its more active defenders, a night-bolt was discovered attached to the door, which served the governor instead of a drawbridge or portcullis, to secure him from hostile incursions from without.

All appeared quiet in the adjoining passages; and although voices were heard at a distance, it was evident that the sound proceeded from the regions below—and that our party might proceed to their several destinations, which were on the chamber floor, without any further apprehension of molestation.

Schwartz and Poole were able, without difficulty, to find their apartments—and Percy, who,

with the aid of a light, recognized the position of his—only requested them to accompany him to the door, in order that he might incur no new adventures, by again falling into an error which had occasioned so much uproar and mischief.

When he had seized the handle of the lock in his hand, he whispered "Good night" to his companions, but finding that the door did not yield immediately to his attempt to open it, he called them back with a look of some surprise—for not only did he feel assured, after looking about him again for a moment, that this was his proper destination, but his boots had been left on the outside of the threshold, which marked it without question as his own room. He turned the lock backwards and forwards, but still the door remained firm; and he could no longer doubt that it was locked, perhaps within, but if without, the key had been carried away.

It was unanimously decided, that this was a manœuvre of the enemy, and that the only remedy was to retort it, by forcing open the barrier to the chamber, which, by the right and title of purchased hospitality, was Percy's own castle, for

the space and duration of that night at least. The frail nature of the impediment opposed little resistance to his shoulder, when manfully set against it. The door flew open upon the first shock, but, as he smiled to his companions at his success, and was stepping forward to enter, a female form rushed through the breach at the same moment, and in her flight, not only knocked the candle from the loose hold which Poole had upon it, but nearly overthrew the whole phalanx, who had been unprepared for so rude and active a manœuvre.

Whither the fugitive had flown, was as much a mystery as her previous occupation of the room —for, having achieved her escape by the discomfiture of her invaders, not a foot-fall was to be heard, nor a sound returned to the exclamations of the trio, who, in their desperation and subsequent surprise, had prepared themselves, *à guerre ouverte*, for a renewal of hostilities from the faction below.

In this, however, they were agreeably disappointed, for they were left to deliberate upon their future operations, although in the dark,

without interruption, and nothing further occurring to prevent the execution of their original plan; Percy was placed in secure possession of his chamber, whilst Poole and Schwartz entertained no doubt with respect to the discovery of their own, even without the help of a light.

Percy's first object was to secure himself against intrusion, which required some effort of ingenuity, considering the fractured state of his principal barrier. He therefore drew out a chest of drawers, which he discovered near at hand for his purpose, and placed them against the breach, any attempt to remove which, by external effort, must necessarily awaken him from his sleep, should he be fortunate enough to secure such a blessing after the toils and adventures of this eventful day.

Alas! no man can see beyond his nose in calculating the future, and Percy found that the more anxiously he desired and needed rest, the further it appeared to recede from him. He tossed and turned in his bed, and if a momentary oblivion passed over his senses—he was roused by some imaginary noise, or baffled by some in-

voluntary motion of his own. Again, all the circumstances and events of the day poured in upon him, like waters through an unperceived vent in a flood-gate. He tried in vain to check the inundation, by opening an outlet into a train of thought, wholly dissonant and unconnected with the recent passages of his life. In vain—Morpheus had taken some mortal offence at this his impatient votary, and though it may be predicted generally of the whole household, that his godship's poppies were by this time bountifully distributed through every other apartment, high and low, of this extensive hostelrie, not a leaf, a grain, or a drop, was granted to the feverish supplications of our poor friend Percy.

As he lay thus desponding and restless—he fancied that he heard a noise, which differed from the throbbing and ringing of his own pulses, in the ear. He listened—and it was repeated in a less questionable appeal to his senses—for the heavy sash of an old-fashioned window, however cautiously raised, will, with the various accompaniments of warped timber, shrunken lintels, creaking pullies, and a swinging lead weight, contrive

to convey to the ears of any one disposed or compelled to listen to what is going forward, certain intelligence of its movements. In the present instance it told its story so plainly and audibly, that our watchful friend could not be deceived, had he been even disposed to be so—but this was by no means the case. He felt that he was in a state of siege, however innocently he had been involved as a principal in the war—and he doubted not that the enemy, like a skilful general, was about to avail himself of the position which not only cut him off from his allies, but which, not being fortified like the door, lay open and naked to his attack. Percy reverted to his former suspicion that young Dossiter was at the bottom of the conspiracy. Ignorant of the numbers, as of the mode by which the assault was to be made by the invader or invaders, he considered it more prudent to watch their movements, before he resorted to more active measures for his defence.

He therefore slipped gently out of bed, and proceeded with the utmost caution towards the window, from which his former alarm had arisen, and to which he was now the more easily

guided by an indistinct glimmer of light which shone through the curtains, and which he welcomed as the harbinger of coming day. In this, however, he was mistaken—and he perceived, on gently opening a small portion of the curtain at the side, that the light proceeded from a lanthorn on the ground below the window, and served to display the outline of a female figure, mounted evidently on a ladder, and with all the precautions necessary to secret operations, proceeding to raise the sash in the manner we have before described.

If Percy lost all apprehension of hostile intentions when he discovered the sex of his invader, he was involved in greater doubt and difficulty, as to the object of the invasion, and curiosity impelled him to preserve the same cautious mode of operation, which a sense of personal danger had previously suggested.

The sash rose, not by inches, but by digits, (Heaven protect us from the guilt of a pun in such a moment,) and a pause of several seconds followed every creak, or crack, or hitch, occasioned by setting the ponderous machine in motion.

At length the opening became sufficiently enlarged, to admit, with some inconvenience, the head of the intruding party,—which moved timidly around in every direction, with the obvious intention of viewing, as far as it was possible, the internal state of the garrison.—A moment of irresolution followed—but all remaining silent, an attempt was made to awaken the attention, as it should appear, of some expected ally, within the garrison itself!

Percy began to enjoy the scene. He could account for the absence of the party within, although he was as much at a loss as ever to account for her temporary occupation of the apartment from which he had witnessed her rapid and mysterious retreat. He resolved to lie *perdu*, in order to watch the event of the *escalade*, and to catch, if possible, some clew, which, he could not divest himself of the suspicion, must still lead to something connected with his previous adventures.

"Hist! hist!" was gently insinuated through the opening—no answer—"Ma'am—Miss"—still the summons was unnoticed.—Percy smiled in-

wardly at his own knowledge of the cause—and at the evident symptoms of disappointment, which were displayed as strongly as the critical situation of the individual would permit her to exhibit, by a sort of "cluck" *sotto voce.*

Another attempt was made with an air of desperation, but still in a low whisper.—"Are you there, Ma'am?—pray, speak."—And the reader may judge of Percy's astonishment, when, within a few paces of himself, he heard another voice, thus reluctantly called forth, as was evident, by the apprehension of increasing audacity on the part of the ally, whispering, "Hush! hush!" Surprised, but not thrown off his guard, he still preserved the most profound silence, and contracted, rather than enlarged the opening, which gave him a full view of the space between the curtain and the deeply recessed window. His motions had been so wary and silent, in the first instance, that he had reason to hope they had escaped the observation of the enemy he had unknowingly sheltered within, as well as from the intruder without. This appeared to be the case, for he soon perceived the opposite division of the

curtain begin to move and flutter, and, in a few seconds, sufficiently withdrawn, to discover something in the form and fashion of a head projected forwards, so as to approach nearer towards contact with the other, which appeared *presque guillotiné*, as it turned to meet it.

"Is the fellow asleep?" was the first whispered question.

"Hush!"

"Do you hear him move?"

"Two minutes ago—he was talking"

"To whom?"

"To himself."

"In his sleep?"

"I fear not."

"It is impossible for you to creep out here, unless we can get the sash up, Ma'am."

"I must try—Hush!"

"What could they put the man here for?—all would have been well, but for him."

"I beg," cried Percy, obtruding his head through the curtain, and laughing at the impediment he had unintentionally thrown in the way of some arrangement, in which, it was now clear,

he had no part or share destined to him; "I beg, ladies, that I may not prove any interruption to your schemes, of whatever nature they may be.—So far from opposing, I beg leave to assure you of my hearty concurrence in any measures which may tend to facilitate them."

A slight shriek escaped from the two female lips.

"Good God!" exclaimed the one of the interior, and the curtain wavered in her hand, ere it closed upon the speaker.

"Why, the man's in his shirt, I verily believe," cried the other.

"Darkness, Madam," answered Percy, "is a sufficient covering—even if the curtain were not a more substantial ——"

"I beg we may have none of your impudence, Sir,"—for, it must be acknowledged, that Percy's tone and manner, which the vulgarity of the lady at the window appeared to warrant, were more light and flippant than might be exactly justified before a jury of high-bred dames.

"For Heaven's sake, do not alarm the house," cried the lady *dernier la coulisse*—and the sounds

were of so different a character, that Percy no longer felt disposed to persevere in the language of banter or levity.

"Let me entreat," he said, "that you, Madam," addressing a piece of agitated curtain drapery, "will command my services, in whatever they may best contribute to extricate you from the difficulties in which you appear to be involved—in one moment, I shall be prepared to await your directions;" and he precipitately retreated —carefully avoiding the direction from which the voice he had addressed had originally proceeded —to the interior, and darkest recesses of the apartment.

Some consultation, in the mean time, was carried on in whispers by his mysterious visitors; and by the time Percy had hastily equipped himself, the lady—for the little which had escaped her, was sufficient to establish her claim to that title with him—was in the act of placing herself on the ladder, from which the other was descending, and supporting her in the rear.—He flew to her assistance, and again proffered his services with a sincerity which could not be mistaken.

She paused in her descent, as one of his arms encircled her waist, and the other guided her hand to the hold upon the ladder.

"Hold up the lanthorn, my good woman," he whispered to the woman, who had, by this time, reached the ground.

"No, no," cried the lady, who had descended so far as to bring her face in a direct line with Percy's, as he strained himself from the window to assist her descent—and approaching, indeed, as nearly as decency would admit, to immediate contact.—The woman below either did not hear the countermand, or was intuitively inclined to obey a lord of the creation, for she raised the lanthorn sufficiently high to throw a strong light upon the faces of those above—and nearly sufficient to have involved, and overturned the happiness of two of the most amiable of Heaven's creation.

"Gracious Providence!" exclaimed Percy—and his hold had nearly relaxed from the half suspended object whom he thus recognized.

"Percy!—that voice could not have deceived me"—and the additional weight which fell upon his arm—called the other to his aid—and within

their compass, he held all that earth contained capable of realizing his hopes and ensuring his happiness.

Oh! that it were not profane to smile in such a moment of blessed recognition—but it must not be.—Fair—gentle—romantic reader, reflect only upon the bliss, which so unexpected a meeting must have shed over the souls of lovers devoted like Percy Mallory and Loo Bellenden—and forget, if possible, the awkward position in which the Fates thought proper to place them, in the most interesting moment of their lives. Here could be no kneeling—no throwing of eyes, blue or black, upon the ground—no waving of hands, or display of white kerchiefs—Percy was in the position of a warehouse-man letting down a bale of goods, without the advantage of a crane—and the all beautiful, all dignified Loo Bellenden hanging suspended in mid-air, like—for the simile must also be consistently preserved—the bale of goods itself.—Percy felt not the weight of his treasure—but how it came there, was the first question that suggested itself to his inquiry, after he had recovered his senses—for, although

neither he nor his fair burthen fell from their elevation—it was not until some time after their descent upon *terra firma*, that either of them was sufficiently recovered to advert, even to an explanation of this extraordinary rencontre, and the still more extraordinary circumstances which had led to it.

This was done, when it came to be done, in the shortest and most summary manner, consistent with a clear understanding of their actual position—but as the generality of our readers may not be so quick in understanding us, as two lovers who so thoroughly understood every turn of countenance, and every half word, which spoke volumes to each other,—we must postpone the explanation for a short period, in order to leave our two young friends at liberty to pursue such measures, as were found necessary in this critical posture of affairs. After various suggestions—and many obstacles, which propriety and the rules of society, which presented themselves in the shape of objections, on the part of the young lady, had been removed, it was finally resolved, that horses should be provided from another inn—in order to

prevent any alarm, or let or hindrance from the household, whose hostile disposition, during the previous part of the night, gave little hope of cordial aid or assistance, should it be roused out of its present state of inactivity. The aid-du-camp, who stood aloof during this council of lovers, was now summoned as the agent of their will—and a liberal addition to what she had already earned in the service, together with her perfect knowledge of the *carte du pays*, rendered her as active as she was useful in the progress of their measures.

Percy re-ascended the ladder—and removing the impediment which he had placed as a barricado to his door, stole, by the help of the first dawn of morning, to his original sitting-room, and to his perfect satisfaction, found the blue leather trunk safe and untouched where he had deposited it on the preceding night. He now secured it with his other moveables—wrote a few hasty lines to be delivered to Mr Rycott in the morning, stating an urgent and indispensable call to London as the cause of his abrupt departure—and entreating to see him on his arrival in town.—With

the note he left what, he thought, would more than cover any pecuniary demands upon him, on the score of hospitality—and descended the ladder, just as four posters from the neighbouring inn were harnessed to Lord Harweden's carriage, and Loo Bellenden, with a decent-looking young woman, as her companion, had already taken her seat in it. The wheel boy, who acted as footman on the occasion, as he held the door in his hand, just ready to give it the last hearty jerk home—said, with a look, which could not be misunderstood,

"Nor'ward, Sir?"

"No such thing—on as fast as you can lay heels to the ground to Stilton!"

The door was shut with less vigor—and a wink from the lad to the woman, who kept bobbing her thanks and adieus with her now almost useless lanthorn, intimated something between a sense of disappointment, and a regret that he had been so unnecessarily put upon his mettle, to expedite matters for a mere dog-trot expedition southward.

It may be supposed that the lovers, thus brought together, after so long a separation, had no inten-

tion of repairing the deficiencies of their night's rest—although Percy, in very bad French, ventured to ask Miss Bellenden if her bodkin friend had been equally disturbed with themselves.

"We have neither of us been in bed," was the direct answer.

"Humph!" said Percy, whilst he hailed with delight the gradual approaches of the leaden God towards the damsel, who first displayed his influence upon the quivering eye-lids of the poor girl, by the obvious tendency of her head to sink upon Percy's shoulder.—He begged her "not to mind him," as he endeavoured to accommodate himself, so as to catch her when she should nod again, upon the pillow, which she thus instinctively sought.

At length he was successful, and he gave Loo Bellenden a look, which there was light enough now to convey to her, and what was still more important, sufficient to carry back an approving and sympathetic smile upon the success of his project.

But it is the fate of man's schemes to carry disappointment even into their utmost fruition.—

When the conversation, as was naturally and inevitably the case, began to grow more and more deeply interesting, Percy, whose mouth was within two inches of the *chaperon's* ear—and whose heart was close under the spot he had so ingeniously chosen for her head, was incapable of uttering a word above his breath, lest he should rouse his dormant partner, even if she escaped from the disturbance of the palpitations, which were visibly operating upon her head, as it rose and fell responsively to them.

The penalty of Tantalus was a tread-mill, in comparison with the rack, upon which our young friend was stretched, until, rendered desperate, he determined to make an effort to extricate himself from this new species of torture. He contrived to slip a military cloak, which had been put into the carriage, as the regular travelling companion of Lord Harweden, from beneath him—and to roll it up, so as to form a pillow—not the softest—on his knees—and gradually suffering the unconscious sleeper—who, to do her justice, seemed as admirably qualified for her office as any of her illustrious archetypes of Ephesus—to drop, inch by

inch, at every strong respiration of the lungs—which we do not choose to designate by the vulgar term in use for it—from the shoulder, down the arm, until he safely lodged her head, with the single alarm of a most portentous nasal ejaculation, as he released himself somewhat too suddenly from his supporting position, on the spot destined for its reception.

All was now as it should be, or as nearly so as circumstances would admit—and Percy lost not a moment in pouring out all that he had to say, in return for all that he had hitherto been only able to listen to.

But we shall sooner arrive at all that can be interesting to our readers, by avoiding the minute details which were spread over ninety miles of solid turnpike road, and left half untold by the loquacious interlocutors. It has already been seen, that the Dossiters had taken their measures to secure the person of Lord Harweden's daughter upon the death, or probability of the death, of the supposed Lord Brandon—and that a supplementary scheme for the equal security of Percy Mallory, when he appeared in the character of Lord Har-

weden's agent, had suggested itself to the fertile mind of the elder of the schemers.

How Miss Bellenden has so suddenly and unexpectedly made her appearance in this *melée*—some sagacious readers, and ALL the reviewers, will immediately ascertain to their own satisfaction—but, as we write for all classes and descriptions of persons, and not for conjurors alone, we will set down the matter in the more orderly form of historical narrative—but we must reserve this for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT Loo Bellenden was the daughter of Lord Harweden, may, by this time, be probably guessed—but how she became so completely dependent upon Mr Clement Dossiter remains to be explained, not only to our readers, but to the young lady herself.

When the Countess of Harweden announced her unexpected pregnancy, it will be remembered, that, in her husband's confessions to Percy, his Lordship had resolved, for some family purposes, *coute qui coute*, to have a son and heir. His plans, so ably seconded by Dossiter, it will be also recollected, were ultimately successful, and a male child was substituted for the daughter to which her Ladyship gave birth. As the lady was not to be admitted into the confidence of the confede-

rates, there might have been a difficulty in convincing her, that she had produced twins—although there was none, under proper management, of satisfying her, that she had produced a boy instead of a girl. The immediate disposal of the legitimate offspring, therefore, devolved, as a matter of course, upon Mr Clement Dossiter, who received no other injunction respecting the discharge of his duty, than that the unfortunate child should be safely disposed of at a distance, and that every clew or trace connected with her birth should be carefully obliterated or concealed.

The widow of an officer, distantly related to the Dossiters, had been rather importunate in her application to that gentleman for certain sums in which he stood indebted to her late husband, but for which her vouchers were defective in some of the technicalities of the law.—What would have been the fate of Mrs Bellenden's claims, had they rested solely upon Mr Dossiter's construction of them, we have no certain means of ascertaining; but, fortunately for her, having free access to the resources of my Lord Harweden, on the present occasion, he settled upon the lady, under profes-

sions of an overstrained liberality, a handsome annuity, clogged with the simple condition of a residence on the continent, and the education of a female orphan, who was for a certain period to pass for her own offspring.

Of Mrs Bellenden we have heard but little, but that little is sufficient to shew how conscientiously she discharged the duty which thus accidentally devolved upon her—and, if the reader could have gazed upon the lovely animated countenance—and have listened to the voice of truth in such accents of fluent melody, as poured from the pure lips of Loo Bellenden, while she conversed as *compagnon de voyage* with her admiring lover, he would with him have expressed his wonder and admiration, that such a piece of perfect workmanship could ever have been the product of one whom a Dossiter had selected for the task. It is only necessary to say, that the worthy lawyer knew little about the person thus selected, beyond her pecuniary claims upon him; and for the safer custody of a secret, which was as important at that period to his own interests, as to those of his noble employer—his communi-

cations were strictly limited to what he always professionally termed—the needful.

Upon the death of this excellent woman, a new arrangement became necessary, and Dossiter, thinking that the young lady might with safety be now brought nearer home, and having already, from the dissipated course of life pursued by the supposed Lord Brandon, foreseen the probable advantages of uniting her with his own son, as she would, by the death of the male heir, become entitled to a considerable property entailed upon the children of Lord Harweden, in the event of the title descending to a collateral heir, he laid his plans so as to meet the several exigencies in the event of prompt measures becoming necessary.

As a preliminary step, he had contrived so to embarrass the property of his employer—whose previous dissipated mode of life, with the heavy drains upon his purse by Lord Brandon, and the habitual neglect of his affairs, had rendered him almost dependant upon his agent—that ruin and exposure seemed at one and the same moment to stare the unfortunate nobleman in the face. It was made to appear to him, that should the exist-

ence of a legitimate daughter ever be discovered—and any claimant arise to demand an account of the property to which she was legally entitled, it would be found, that he had trenched upon it in some instances, and in others had so deeply mortgaged it, that a foreclosure was threatened, and could only be averted by the immediate payment of a considerable sum of money. Lord Harweden was never intended by nature to be a rogue. He had been seduced by strong passions, and with the devil at his elbow—we speak figuratively of Mr Clement—to play a rogue's part on certain occasions, but he had still a sense of honor and integrity at bottom—if not sufficient to rouse his energies, and shake off the trammels which bound him, at least ample for the purpose of galling and embittering every hour of his existence. He could not bear the thought of tarnishing the name and honor of an ancient family in his own person—and when such a statement of his affairs was artfully laid before him, he declared that there was no sacrifice he was not ready to make, as the price of redeeming himself from the degrading, though, perhaps, remote exposure of having appropriated

to himself property to which he knew—and compunctiously felt—that there was a legitimate claimant.

When every expedient for raising the money was ingeniously proved to be impracticable by Mr Dossiter, he, at length, as an effort of disinterestedness, which he did not fail to set forth in the most glowing colours, suggested the possibility of his being able to supply the necessary sums out of his own little savings, and the assistance of friends, IF his Lordship would consent to secure the property in question by a new arrangement and settlement to his family, by giving his daughter in marriage to his son Mr Clarendon Dossiter. The rage of Lord Harweden, at such a proposition, for the moment, exceeded even the galling apprehension of being eventually detected in a fraud upon his daughter's property, and he accordingly gave full vent to his feelings. Mr Dossiter—who knew his man—bore all with the most admirable composure and philosophy. He had more than once gently checked his Lordship, by assuring him he had said "Enough,"—and when he could say no more, he simply added, rising from his

chair,—" Well, then, my Lord, I have only to inform Mr Bowerbank, that he may proceed to foreclose ——"

"On your life, I charge you—do no such thing."

And thus did the tide begin to ebb—and if it did not in its reflux leave everything as Mr Dossiter had pre-arranged—it was because he perceived the advantage of an alternative which might be opened to him by a compromise.

The money was raised—and Lord Harweden signed an agreement, by which he engaged to give his consent to the marriage of Clarendon Dossiter with his daughter at any period after she should arrive at the age of nineteen, provided the sums now advanced to redeem a portion of her property—bearing interest to be paid by his Lordship until she should arrive at the age of twenty-one—should be vested in her, and settled upon her and her children—without a discovery of her real and natural claims.

Thus—no specific period being fixed for the marriage, Dossiter perceived the advantage of being able to choose his own times and seasons—

for we need hardly observe to our more intelligent readers, that the worthy lawyer had views somewhat beyond securing the young lady's hand—or even her property, of which he was in fact to become in part a purchaser.

The death or removal of the fictitious Lord Brandon would, as we have before stated, render the Earl's daughter the heiress of very considerable estates, and, although Dossiter had speculated upon the effects of premature dissipation upon the weakly constitution of this young man, he felt that he had another string to his bow—and if death were too lenient in claiming a victim, he had it always in his power to employ the next powerful agent in removing troublesome persons—namely, the law—so as effectually to disqualify him from all competition with his son's wife.

That Lord Harweden did not suspect his agent of being capable of sacrificing him altogether to his own interests, may be attributed to his Lordship being only half a rogue—or to his knowledge of Dossiter's anxiety still to stand well with the world, which his share in his Lordship's delinquency, if made public, would effectually

counteract—but that he was disposed to trust him no further than was necessary, may be inferred from certain other conditions which he insisted upon annexing to the instrument in question. In the first place, he stipulated that he should be at liberty, at any period previous to the actual marriage, to withdraw his consent, and dissolve the engagement, upon refunding the sum advanced, and on paying a similar sum by way of redemption or penalty for non-fulfilment of the agreement—and, in the next place, it was covenanted that any disclosure of the rank, birth, or family, of the young lady, on the part of Dossiter or his son, should, *ipso facto*, render the whole transaction null and void.

The necessities of Lord Brandon, without other motives which might have been superadded, would, Lord Harweden felt satisfied, be sufficient to induce him to concur with his Lordship in new-settling the property, when he should become of age—and, in this event, he proposed to acknowledge his daughter as the offspring of a private attachment, and to reinvest her with those rights to which she was legitimately entitled—that is, he

proposed to salve his own conscience by conveying to her as a gift that which was in fact her inheritance—and, at the same time, to save his family from a degrading alliance with plebeian blood, by bastardizing his own lawful issue! Such precious casuists are men, when drawn aside from the straight high-road of moral rectitude!

His Lordship, however, might just as well have reasoned aloud, and opened his whole scheme, with all its shades of doubt and suspicion, to his worthy agent, who traced every minute working of his Lordship's mind, and anticipated the means of counteracting or countervailing each new expedient, as it ingeniously suggested itself to his Lordship's adoption.

Fortunately for Lord Harweden—as it is indeed for the still more honest portion of mankind, your thorough-paced rogues are sometimes too cunning—and not unfrequently involve themselves in so many intricacies, in order to "make assurance doubly sure," that at last they get entangled in attempting to find their way out of them.

In order to prevent the probable effects of remorse, which for many years had visibly tended to

undermine the peace of Lord Harweden—from taking any sudden turn in favour of his daughter, Dossiter had fabricated the story, to which we have heard his Lordship refer, of her having been, through excess of grief for the loss of Mrs Bellenden, reduced to a state of actual derangement. This account was rendered more plausible in consequence of a previous misrepresentation, which had been consistently maintained in all communications with Lord Harweden, that his daughter was constitutionally weak in her intellects—the motive and object of which were clearly to lull any rising interest his Lordship might feel for his deserted child—and to prevent any desire on his part to see her.

It was not, however, without a bitter pang, that Lord Harweden, about two years previous to the present period of our history, had given his sanction to her being placed under restraint—a pang which might have been saved him, had he been witness to the interesting scenes—which were destined to give a colour to her future life—amid the wild and romantic hills of Cumberland, where another victim of his intriguing agent was

also acting a prominent and important part, which might have appeared to warrant much stronger suspicions of derangement than any displayed by poor Loo Bellenden!

Mr Dossiter, who, among his few good qualities, might claim that of attachment to his own family, had at this time an unfortunate sister returned upon his hands, by the death of a man of rank, who had some years before withdrawn her from the paternal roof, and invested her with the government of his own establishment. This noble protector no doubt intended all for the best, but, not being used to calculations of any kind, he had especially neglected to make any computation upon so uncertain an occurrence as death—and the consequence to Miss Clara Dossiter was fatal—for his Lordship was most unexpectedly called away after a brilliant debauch, and, in his hurry, neglected to leave a single memorandum in favour of that lady. A small annuity had indeed been secured to her, through the management of her affectionate brother, soon after the connection had been formed—but what were a few hundreds *per*

annum to a lady who had for years been accustomed to dissipate thousands!

Even Clement Dossiter saw there was nothing to be done to serve her—for the heirs-at-law having due notice of the event, anticipated all the arrangements which his ingenuity would have readily supplied, and by fairly turning the lady out of doors, whilst they sealed up every thing within, the lawyer was too much at home in the business not to be aware that *there* was an end of the affair.

With all his sympathy and affection for this fallen branch of his family, Dossiter had taken every precaution, to prevent the evil spreading to the sounder part of it; nay, so tenacious was he on this head, that, generally as he was known—and extensive as were his connections—it may be doubted whether a single individual in the whole of the wide circle ever heard of his having a sister! This was a condition—the *sine quâ non* of his friendship, and interest in her concerns—and as a widowed lady of high respectability, Mrs Norcliffe, whom he named for the occasion, was placed at the head of an establishment to re-

ceive Miss Bellenden on her return from the continent. No one could possibly object to the strict and admirable deportment of this lady, in the discharge of her matronly office—and if some giddy persons may be disposed to consider her to have been over-tenacious on points of religious observance, they will have the charity to recollect, that the "Greater the sinner, the greater the saint," is an axiom, as rife among the *serious* classes of modern society, as it was wont to be influential in converting the French *coquette d'un certain age*, into a *devôte!*

But we are not about to enter into the process of this good lady's conversion, or the advantages she derived from the healing influence of Mr Flowerdew, who had himself been expelled the university, for certain excesses incident to youth, and who, consequently, was the better qualified to illustrate the good effects of repentance. Miss Bellenden certainly never had reason to doubt the purity of her conduct, however rigid she might consider her, in her domestic discipline; and Mademoiselle Baguenaudiere set her down as

a very dragon of chastity—*outrageusement vertueuse.*

Nothing occurred to break in upon the rules prescribed by Dossiter to Mrs Norcliffe, for her entire seclusion from society, until the accidental interruption of it by Percy; and no one will be disposed to impute to that lady any dereliction of duty, in the measures adopted by her to remedy the evil. If the admission of Mr Flowerdew be uncharitably interpreted into a breach of contract with her patron, we have only to ask, what a "poor lone woman" could have done without his support—or what would have been her situation opposed to Loo Bellenden, who, upon more occasions than one, had drawn over the whole garrison to her side! Be this as it may, Mrs Norcliffe was as prudent, at least, as she was conscientious; and, in spite of her justly excited indignation at the invasion of the Rycotts, she knew how difficult it was to explain facts in detail to a person at the distance of three hundred miles—and knowing the character of her brother, Dossiter, from past experience, she wisely concluded, that, if he were kept in ignorance of the facts alto-

gether, she should be more secure against his drawing any inferences to her disadvantage, from a partial view of them. She, therefore, undertook the management of the campaign upon her own responsibility—nor was it until Percy had departed for London that she ventured—lest it might accidentally transpire, to mention in a letter to Dossiter, that the young man had succeeded, in spite of her vigilance, to force himself into Miss Bellenden's company, during her walks—but that she had taken such measures as had succeeded in driving him from the neighbourhood! It was on receiving this information, that Dossiter displayed to the astonished Percy his knowledge of his attachment.

To return, however, to the prime mover of this complicated piece of machinery.

When the account of the titular Lord Brandon's accident at the gaming-house reached Dossiter, he lost not an hour in setting his emissaries at work. The event upon which his grand scheme mainly depended had, possibly, been anticipated by this unexpected occurrence, and if the young man should—to use his own expression, " make

a die of it," his son's fortune was made.—Clarendon was immediately despatched to the North, with letters to Mrs Norcliffe, who was only so far informed upon the nature of the transaction, as to ensure her ready concurrence in all that she was instructed to do, as essential to the interests of her patron. Loo Bellenden knew her guardian only by name, or rather by the name he chose to be known by, and a handsome, gentlemanly youth, as the bearer of a letter from him as his son, was received by her with every attention, and with all the confidence that such a sanction justly commanded. She was, it must be confessed, rather startled at the sudden and somewhat peremptory summons to attend that gentleman in Lincolnshire, which the letter contained; but when this was accounted for by the urgency of the occasion, and the importance of the communication he had to make, new sensations arose in her breast, and impelled her to acquiesce in the arrangement proposed. One only objection was started, which Mrs Norcliffe treated as ridiculously fastidious, but which Miss Bellenden—for once more tenacious of etiquette than her *cha-*

peron—persevered in maintaining. She positively, but politely, declined undertaking so long a journey, accompanied only by a young gentleman —which called up—in a parenthesis indeed, not to be overheard by Clarendon—an observation, that " Miss Bellenden was not *always* so particular in choosing her companions," which occasioned nothing but a firmer repetition of that young lady's determination, that Mademoiselle Baguenaudiere should accompany her in the carriage. This was positively refused, but, at length, after some private consultation with Mr Radcliffe, *alias* Dossiter, the point was so far conceded, that Mrs Norcliffe's own maid was allowed to attend upon Miss Bellenden, and, in a few hours from her first summons, she was several miles on her road southwards.

Nothing could be more attentive, or less intrusive, than the manners and conduct of Clarendon during the journey—and he had so far insinuated himself into the good graces of his fair companion, that she conversed with him, in the most friendly and unreserved manner, upon the ordinary topics which suggested themselves, or were

incidentally introduced by him. She even looked forward, with some degree of pleasure, independently of the interest she naturally felt, to a meeting with her unknown guardian, whose merits she was led to estimate, in some measure, from the fair specimen afforded by his son.

When the party arrived at Grantham, it was late in the evening of the second day, and Clarendon, who appeared to consult only the ease and comfort of his fellow-travellers, advised that they should remain for the night in this place, as they would now have to pass over cross-roads, which, from their roughness, and the darkness of the night, would add unnecessarily to the fatigue she had already undergone. By rising early in the morning, this inconvenience would be avoided, and they might reach the place of their destination, before the usual breakfast hour of the family.

This was all reasonable and kind, and Miss Bellenden could offer no objection to it. On the contrary, she would have more time to compose her mind for the interesting interview to which she had been taught to look forward, and more refreshed and braced by a good night's rest, to

encounter anything which might be distressing or trying in the nature of the communication.

At an early hour, according to the previous arrangement, she arose, and ringing her bell, desired her maid to be summoned. After a tedious delay, which she imputed to the woman's laziness, she rang again, and not only the chambermaid who had before answered the bell, but the landlady, almost *en chemise*, entered the room, with consternation evidently marked in her countenance.

The lady's maid was no where to be found. After knocking at her door several times, it had been forced open, and instead of finding her whom they sought, they only discovered her bed had not been slept in—and that she had evidently decamped on the previous evening, or very early in the morning.—It was further ascertained, upon examination, that she had carried off with her several little packages belonging to Miss Bellenden, and, among the rest, a small jewel-case, in which a few of the very few personal ornaments she possessed had been hastily packed for her journey.

When Miss Bellenden descended to the sitting-room, she found Clarendon Dossiter cross-examining the waiters, and other domestics of the inn, and indignantly venting his wrath against the mercenary delinquent. This rather softened the young lady, who felt, at first, perhaps as strongly as he professed to do at the moment, and treating the affair as one of little importance to herself, she contented herself, with expressing her surprise, that a *person*, who had lived with Mrs Norcliffe for several years, should have availed herself of an occasion where the temptation was so trifling, when a thousand opportunities must have occurred of gratifying this dangerous propensity with infinitely greater advantage at home.

Clarendon concurred in all she said—and deplored with her the depravity of the age in language more diffuse than her own—but expressed his determination of pursuing the woman, when he should have conducted his charge in safety to her friends. This was the point—Clarendon looked at the young lady, as if waiting her commands. She had not the tenth part of a grain of

prudery in her composition. She made no objection to proceed the remaining ten miles—as it had been stated to her—with the son of her guardian, who had conducted himself with such undeviating propriety during the previous journey. The carriage was accordingly ordered, and they stepped into it.

They soon turned off the high road—and their progress was necessarily slow from the state of the bye-roads through which they had to pass.

Clarendon made a few passing observations, but there was a hesitation in his manner, even in uttering them, that the young lady could not fail to remark—and she asked, with some degree of interest, if he were well. His reply did not satisfy her—he was well, but he had a secret to communicate, which he confessed embarrassed him from the fear of giving offence to one, whom it was his first object to conciliate.—She looked her surprise —and evinced something like the embarrassment which had called forth her observation upon him. This probably encouraged him to proceed—and his advances were in due proportion to the effect

which he thought he perceived working to his advantage.

In short, he boldly avowed a passion, in the most extravagant terms, for his lovely companion —before she could determine in her own mind, whether the preparatory advances were for the purpose of revealing some dreaded mystery respecting her birth, or what it now appeared to be, an insult upon her unprotected situation. The moment the point was ascertained, her very look might have assured Clarendon of his fate, as far as concerned the issue of his suit. She scarcely deigned to answer him—but with a dignity and composure all her own, she simply reminded him of what, as a gentleman and a man of honor, she presumed he had for a moment forgotten, that to avail himself of an occasion which had for a short time thrown her under his protection, for the purpose of abusing the confidence reposed in him, was to break down the barrier which civilized society had raised against the encroachments of barbarism—that to insult a woman, because an accident had momentarily placed her in his power,

was the act of a man who knew neither what was due to himself nor to society.

In vain he protested that he was impelled by the force of his passion. She only smiled at his professions, and turned to the window to avoid further impertinence. But Clarendon had a point to gain, for which he had encountered much toil and anxiety—and had, besides, to account to his father for the execution of that part of their schemes, which rested on his own exertions alone for success.

He found that his companion was not to be moved by the hyperbole of romance, nor to be subdued through her own feminine apprehensions. He, therefore, after an apparent acquiescence in her commands, recommenced his attack, by assuring her of the sincerity of his professions—that he had seen more of her—gained more insight into her character, by having been her inseparable companion for three days, than if they had lived together in society for as many months.

"And could you," she replied, "with such an insight into my character, Sir, make so sorry a

calculation of the effect your change of conduct would make upon it?"

"I calculated upon the sweetness of your disposition to pardon an involuntary fault."

"So far your calculation was correct, Sir—you only erred when you supposed I could pass over a premeditated insult."

Again he swore, and vowed that nothing but the violence of his passion had impelled him to avow it at such a moment; but when he added—cautiously and at a distance at first—that it was the will of her guardian that, for family reasons, an union should take place between her and her humble servant, his son, she again turned upon him a look, that would have petrified any man less broken in to the rebuffs of the world than Clarendon Dossiter.

She returned no other answer—but letting down the glass of the window, she demanded of the driver how far they were from the end of the journey—which the lad answered by pointing to a large square-built red house, standing at the entrance to a wood, about a quarter of a mile from the spot.

In vain Clarendon endeavoured to draw her into conversation, during the short remainder of the drive. She viewed the building as she approached it with considerable interest—and seemed anxious to develope something more interesting to her, even than the object which had brought her thither.

On leaving the carriage, her first inquiry was for Mr Radcliffe. She was received by the master of the mansion on the steps, who returned an evasive answer to her question, and directed his eyes towards young Clarendon.

"My father is not arrived, I suppose?"

"Not yet, Sir."

"Miss Bellenden will find all that hospitality can supply in his absence," added Clarendon.

"I came here, Sir," said Miss Bellenden, addressing her host, "to meet my guardian, Mr Radcliffe—is he, or is he not here—for I begin to suspect that all is not as it should be?"

"You need fear nothing here, Madam," was the reply; "my house ——"

"Your house, Sir!—I understood it was Mr Radcliffe's."

"Ladies will sometimes misunderstand these things—but we will discuss this question hereafter;" and the doctor—for our readers will have discovered our old friend Beekerdyke in the host of the red house—led the way into a handsomely furnished apartment, where breakfast was prepared for the travellers.

Miss Bellenden felt little disposed to eat—and much less so to be sacrificed to any plans which, from the conduct of her fellow-traveller, she could not but apprehend, were in agitation to involve her in engagements, to which her will was to be rendered subservient to the views of her guardian. She demanded of the young man an explanation of the artifice now so obviously practised upon her, in bringing her to a house which had been previously stated to belong to her guardian, and the absence of the guardian himself at a moment, in which he had declared a personal communication of the most interesting nature was to be made to her.

There is a dignity in virtue, which shines especially pre-eminent when resting on its own resources, and cut off from all other aid or associa-

tion. Clarendon, who had faced difficulties, and braved detection under circumstances the most critical, quailed under the firm interrogatories of a simple girl, who was ignorant of all that he, and men like him, boast as a knowledge of the world. He saw that she was not to be imposed upon by equivocation, because she kept the straight high-road, and would detect the least deviation from it in others. He dreaded also that her manner and deportment would lead to suspicion on the part of Doctor Beekerdyke, that the story imposed upon him, respecting her situation, was a mere fabrication, and that he should thereby lose the whole fruit of his father's intrigues and his own labour—to say nothing of the anxiety he really felt, from so close a view of her person and accomplishments, to secure such a woman, under such circumstances, as his wife.

He recovered himself as well as he was able, and throwing an air of peculiar consideration into his manner, whilst he cast a look pregnant with meaning towards the doctor, he assured her that he was only the agent of his father in the business—that he would speedily arrive to pay his respects to

her, and so forth—but dexterously added, "That, with respect to the house in which his friend," bowing to the doctor, "had been so kind to receive them, some misconception must have arisen in her own mind, for no such statement had been made."

She interrupted him, by offering to produce the letter from his father, Mr Radcliffe—at which he only shook his head, and again addressed a side glance to the doctor.

Miss Bellenden felt in her pocket for the letter—but at the moment recollected it was in a *portfeuille* which Mrs Norcliffe's maid had carried off. "The letter has been stolen, Sir—and should the real thief be hereafter discovered ——" but she stopped short. Her suspicions glanced at the truth—but she was unwilling to make a charge which, for the present at least, she could not substantiate. Clarendon was disappointed. He saw that his only chance of satisfying his ally, the doctor, was, if possible, to irritate his intended patient—and it was indifferent to him, as matters stood, how this was effected. He asked, with a look of simple wonder, by what possible means such a

robbery could have taken place, whilst she was in his company.

"By means, probably, Sir, that you are too well acquainted with."

"Me, Madam!"

"The retreat of Mrs Norcliffe's maid remains to be accounted for, Sir, and ——"

"I do not understand you, Miss Bellenden."

"I shall be happy to find that you do not."

"Has anything unpleasant occurred on the road?" asked the doctor.

"Not that I am aware of," replied Clarendon, throwing a very significant glance at his host.

"You are ignorant, I presume," observed Miss Bellenden, with something sarcastic in her tone and manner, "that the maid eloped last night with my property."

"I am certainly not aware of any such occurrence," replied her fellow-traveller, and with admirable adroitness, he threw an air of innocent surprise over his countenance, which was artfully mingled with an appearance of pity.

"Mr Radcliffe!—do I hear you aright?" demanded Miss Bellenden, unaffectedly surprised.

"I never contradict a lady, and must, of course, submit."

"We had better drop the subject," observed the doctor, whose manner evinced the inference he had drawn from this short dialogue—and the settlement of his conviction, which had appeared before to waver, touching the state of the young lady's mind.

"I will fathom it," said Miss Bellenden in a firm tone, which did her cause no good, with the person of most importance to her in the present moment—but all further conversation was interrupted by the annunciation of the arrival of an express from London to the young man. He tore it open, informing Miss Bellenden that it was from his father—but, before he had run over the first page, he changed colour—started from his chair—and, as if to avoid the possibility of its contents being scanned by the eyes of either of his companions, retired to a distant window to collect himself, and finish the perusal. He remained for some moments after he had refolded it in a state of apparent doubt and irresolution—but, suddenly addressing Dr Beekerdyke, he re-

quested to speak with him in private. Miss Bellenden, at the same time, requested that she might be shewn to the apartment destined to her—and left the coast clear for Clarendon to take such measures as his father's suggestions, and his own observations on the *carte du pays* had pointed out as necessary.

With these the reader is already acquainted, and Loo Bellenden retired to her chamber, revolving in her mind all the events which had passed, in such rapid succession, during the last two or three days—and which, upon reviewing them, seemed to be pregnant with some design in which her ignorance was to be made conducive to the plans and designs of others. She never thought highly of Mrs Norcliffe—and that she should not only have so strenuously opposed Mademoiselle Baguenaudiere, the only person of her household in whom she could repose the smallest degree of confidence—but that she should have been disposed to surrender her unprotected to the charge of a young man, and a stranger, convinced her that some design against her had been projected from the beginning, and that she, who ought to have been her pro-

tectress, had, in fact, contributed to betray her. She now called to mind several suspicious circumstances which evinced an understanding between young Dossiter, or Radcliffe, as he called himself, and her female companion during the journey—which tended to confirm, in their fullest extent, the suspicions to which the latter part of that young man's conduct had given birth.

She did not sit down to weep—or to deplore her situation. She felt all the assurance in her own resources, which a mind educated to rely upon itself, in cases of emergency, is sure to feel when roused into action. What was the nature of the house, or of her host, she had no means of ascertaining, but concluded both—and from the remote and retired situation of the former especially—were intended to be subservient to the measures contemplated against her. She knew enough of the laws of her country, to be assured that an appeal to them would at any time rescue her from unjust oppression. She felt full confidence in the protection of Heaven to unoffending innocence—and in the steadiness of her own resolu-

tion to meet her coming difficulties with firmness and decision.

She had been left for some hours to her own meditations, when she received a message from Clarendon, requesting an interview, as he was on the point of setting off for London, in order to meet and receive his final instructions from his "good father."

Upon his appearance, she desired to be informed explicitly what was the object of her being brought to the house in which they were, and why, if he were going to town to meet his father, she was not also to proceed on the journey—to fulfil the only object which had been assigned as the motive for it.

His answers were evasive, as to the principal points—"but he assured her she would find every body disposed to attend to her wishes whilst she remained where she was—and that she might even accompany him to town, if she would afford him a legal sanction to be her protector, and guard against the evils incident to her unprotected situation!"

"Unprotected, Sir!—with Mr Radcliffe formy

guardian!—you surely underrate the virtues, which you, no doubt, inherit from such a father!—No, Sir—you have played your part ill—you have taken the mask off too soon—you have miscalculated your own powers, and, what is more to the purpose, mine. Be assured, whilst I have the protection of Heaven, and an approving conscience, I shall never have recourse to Mr Radcliffe or his son."

"Know you not, Madam, that my father is your legal guardian?"

"Let him prove it legally—and not by entrapping her, whom, if he really be so, he is bound by every law, human and divine, to protect from insult as well as injury."

This was language quite out of the course of Clarendon's reading or pursuits, and he found the contest too unequal to continue it to his own visible disadvantage. He, therefore, departed, leaving behind him fresh matter for reflection on the mind of Miss Bellenden.

Miss Bellenden declined descending to dinner when it was announced to her—requesting that she might be permitted to take her meals in her

own room—at the same time, she expressed a wish for an interview with the gentleman of the house —whose name, for the first time, she now learned —when it suited his convenience.

Her wishes met with no obstruction—and, in the course of an hour, Dr Beekerdyke made his appearance.

"You will, I am sure, Sir," said she, addressing him, when he had taken a seat, "pardon the natural anxiety I feel, to know in what character, and under what circumstances, I am thus intruded as a guest upon a gentleman to whom I am a perfect stranger. My conductor—for what purpose it is vain for me to attempt to account—has refused me this satisfaction, which I feel entitled to ask at your hands."

"Perhaps, Madam," answered he, "it may be as well to avoid the subject altogether."

"It is impossible for me to conceive why ——"

"It may lead to—to unpleasant recollections, Madam—and it is important to ——"

"There are no recollections, Sir, connected with the history of my retired life, which can lead

to anything so unpleasant, as the situation in which I find myself at this moment."

"Perhaps not, Madam—probably not—but still you must be aware, that to dwell unnecessarily upon unavoidable evils is ——"

"It is necessary to ascertain the extent of an evil, in order to apply a remedy, Sir."

"Very well defined, Madam—it is a pity—but you have been subject to evils—that is, to situations as irksome—indeed, it would be difficult to attribute any very great evil to the treatment you have hitherto met with under this roof."

"The evil, Sir, of which I complain, is the attempt to control my independence.—By what right have I been brought here?—By what authority am I detained?"

"These are very unnecessary questions.—As long as you conduct yourself properly, Madam, you will find yourself perfectly unrestrained here."

"Conduct myself properly! do you thus, Sir, address yourself to a young woman of—of education?—But this is from the purpose—answer me simply, am I at liberty to depart?"

"That is the only liberty, which I trust I shall feel called upon to withhold."

"This is more fairly answered—and now, Sir, tell me, as candidly, by whose authority I am thus lodged as your prisoner?"

"Mine is a melancholy office, Madam—and in your present state of mind, even *you* might calculate the embarrassments to which I am subject."

"This is no direct answer, Sir."

"It is all that I can afford."

"Then, Sir, I here demand my liberty as a free-born subject of these realms—and, at your peril, detain me."—She approached the bell to ring it—"I shall order horses, and let me see who will be hardy enough to resist me."

The doctor smiled—but there was something of benevolence, mixed with that professional steadiness and firmness of department, which had become habitual to him.—"I told you, Madam, that such subjects ought to be avoided—when you are calmer, we will converse again. In the mean time, you will, I trust, endeavour to compose

yourself," and without waiting a reply, he left the room.

Miss Bellenden paced the apartment in a state of far greater agitation of mind than she had yet experienced. There was a coolness, and an assumption of superiority, in all that her host had said and done, that kindled more of the warmer feelings in her breast, than had ever been excited there before. That a man should deliberately take upon him to detain her without authority, and without any visible motive on his part, was sufficiently provoking, but that he should treat her like a child—put aside her questions—refuse all explanation—and all this with an air of perfect self-satisfaction, and even an appearance of paternal consideration for herself, baffled all her modes of reasoning, and provoked her in proportion as she was unable to reconcile it to her comprehension.

Those transient feelings quickly evaporated, but left her only the more firmly resolved to leave the place, and set this usurped authority at defiance. She again rang her bell, but no one attended to it—this was a new source of difficulty—she open-

ed her door, and proceeded along a passage, which led to the staircase, by which she had ascended. —A door with iron grating was now opposed to her passage, and she saw, with real horror, that she was actually a prisoner.

Her philosophy was now, indeed, put to a severe test. Her trials were of a nature altogether unlike any she had hitherto had to contend with —and she saw the necessity of calling up every resource to enable her to meet them, consistently with the principles which had, up to this period, carried her safely through all the difficulties of her short but not uneventful life.

She appealed to Heaven for aid, whilst she earnestly set herself at work, to calculate the means of extrication from her present situation. To address her host was out of the question—he was evidently fixed in his determination, whatever might be his motive to detain her—and her only chance appeared to be, through the agency of some subordinate minister, who might be accessible, if not to the pleadings of humanity, at least to the influence of a bribe. But even here, all

communication appeared to be cut off, which might enable her to try the experiment.

She resolved, however, to subdue and keep under control her feelings, and to wait her opportunity, and, in the mean time, to reconnoitre her local position, in order to ascertain if there were any practicable means of releasing herself, by her own unaided efforts.

For this purpose, she examined her windows, but, to her horror and disappointment, she found them screwed down, although their height from the ground prevented the possibility of escape that way. This evinced so much of design and premeditation in the conspiracy, whatever might be its nature against her, that her indignant feelings were once more strongly excited—whilst her curiosity to discover the motives of it was as forcibly awakened.

Unassisted, her efforts would, she found, be fruitless—she thought it advisable to consult the extent of the means in her power of purchasing that aid, which was now become indispensable to cast even a ray of hope upon the prospect before her.—Her principal effects had been carried off,

in her trinket-case, by Mrs Norcliffe's maid, but fortunately she had taken from a drawer, where it had long lain useless and neglected, a purse of English guineas, which had been left her by Mrs Bellenden—and scarcely knowing why, except that, leaving home, she might want more money than was contained in her ordinary purse, she had put it in her pocket.—She now emptied the contents on the table before her, in order to apportion her resources to the several contingencies against which it was necessary to be provided—but in the abstraction of the moment, and sitting with her back to the door, she had not heard the noise made in opening it, nor was she made aware of the fact, until, on raising her eyes, she beheld a rosy-cheeked country girl, gazing with distended eyes of admiration upon the lady and her treasure. Her undefined notions of anything beyond a hoarded unit of the species, for an annual fairing, probably magnified the heap before her into the riches of the world, and by a very natural association, the possessor of them into a conjuror or fairy—for she stood motionless for several seconds, without being able to withdraw her

eyes from the table, or to explain the cause of her appearance. Miss Bellenden, although, at first, offended at the intrusion, congratulated herself upon her having escaped the less agreeable one of her host—and rapidly drew a favourable inference from the very stupefaction of the simple being before her.—It was necessary, however, to sound her way—and she demanded her business.

The girl started at the question, and bobbing to the very ground, informed her "worship's honor," that she had been sent up to inquire whether she would attend the party in the drawing-room, or have her tea sent up to her own apartment;—but before half the message had been delivered, her eyes were again rivetted upon the table, as Miss Bellenden, who apprehended the intrusion of other witnesses, was collecting the gold, and returning it to its original depository.

"Lauk, Ma'am!" at length the girl, as if no longer able to contain herself, "how comes they to let ye keep all that there money?"

Miss Bellenden inquired what she meant, adding, she did not suppose she was in a den of robbers who would strip her of her property.

"Sure, Miss, they would, as soon as look at ye—Why, lauk, it's the first thing as they does; and, ecod, when you're asleep to-night, they'll have your pockets away from ye, an ye do not look sharpen about ye."

"What—rob—plunder me in my chamber!"

"They never suffers no patient to have money, Miss, for fear of corrumping the sarvants."

"Patients!—and where, in the name of Heaven! my good girl, am I?" demanded Miss Bellenden, rising in extreme agitation from her chair.

"Lauk, as if ye didn't know that, now as you're in yere loosing interval."

"Where?"

"Now as you ha'nt a fit on ye, Miss ——"

"A fit!—d'ye take me for a mad woman?"

"I don't understand them things—and thank God for it—but they tooked you of course for one on em, or ye wouldn't ha been here."

"Is this then a mad-house?"

"Lauk, Miss, don't mention the word—master's as angry as any thing at us calling it any thing but a spectacle for arranged gentlefolk."

The secret was out—and we will not attempt to

describe the cruel agitation which the intelligence produced in the mind of Miss Bellenden; but the more imminent the danger, the more prompt, it instantly struck her, must be the measures to extricate herself from it. To detain the girl at the moment seemed imprudent, as it would necessarily suggest to her keeper that she was tampering with her. Placing two guineas in the hands of the simple girl, she asked her, if she could find means to return to her in the course of the evening, as she had something of importance to the interests of both to communicate to her. The girl would have attempted to leap the moon under such an influence as she now grasped in the palm of her hand, when coupled with the implied pledge of sharing the treasure, which danced before her imagination as plainly as when she saw it spread over the table before her. She informed the young lady that at nine o'clock the wards were all locked, and Dr Beekerdyke himself saw every patient secured; but that, unless he had reason to suspect the approach of any paroxysm, Miss Bellenden, who was in the convalescent wing of the house, would have no restraint put

upon her within the limit prescribed by the grated door, which was always closed, unless the person were a parlour patient. This door, however, was only closed by a spring, which might be withdrawn on the outer-side without a key, and through this communication she pledged herself to revisit Miss Bellenden after the lock-up hour.

We need not trouble our readers with details which may be comprehended in a few general and leading facts. The summons of Dr Beekerdyke to attend our friend Percy, by our active host at Stamford, facilitated, or rather completely opened, the means of escape to Miss Bellenden. The girl was tired of her service, both on account of its remote and unsocial situation, and the unpleasant scenes to which she was occasionally witness in the necessary discipline of the establishment—but even had she been wedded to it, the tempting offers of Miss Bellenden were of a nature to weaken the attachment, and make her a willing emigrant from the domicile of Dr Beekerdyke. She was not aware of the direction in which the doctor's visit was directed, for all things within those walls were conducted with the nicest atten-

tion to secrecy—she might otherwise have doubted the prudence of accompanying her new mistress to the very spot in which the chance of detection and detention was at least ten to one against them. The damsel, however, had cogent reasons for the route she took; for, in the first place, the road to Stamford was the only one with which she was sufficiently acquainted to traverse with any degree of certainty in the dark—and, in the next, this experience had been gained by a monthly visit to her sister, who was the ostler's wife at the very inn in question.

The reader may picture to himself, if he pleases, all the inconveniences, hazards, and hair-breadth 'scapes of a *trajet* of five miles—for luckily there was a footpath which precluded all chance of encountering the doctor, which could scarcely have been avoided on the high-road—a dark night—over dreary commons—by the side of stagnant meres, and through dense and tangled coppices—but we are bound to say, that, except a few "goblin fancies" on the part of the conductress, and the near loss of a shoe on that of her fair companion, they reached the back part of the premises

of the inn at Stamford, soon after the departure of Dr Beekerdyke had acquitted his patient Percy of the charge *non compos*, so laboriously prosecuted by mine host of the *****.

The first precaution was to secure Miss Bellenden from observation, and the shelter of a shed, in an adjoining field, was easily discovered and adopted for that purpose. The girl's sister was next to be found, if possible, without disturbing any other part of the family, and this was the more easily effected, as her chamber was in an outhouse at the extremity of the stable-yard. She was commissioned to make her own terms for her sister's aid and advice, for, however Miss Bellenden might rejoice in her liberation from such a prison-house, she could form no possible scheme for her future security, and must, in some measure, depend upon the suggestion of strangers for procuring a present asylum. To return to Glendara was only to replace herself in the hands of those who were now obviously her persecutors—she had revolved in her mind a plan which had as yet taken no substantive form, but which presented itself upon those general principles which

are our best guide in all cases of doubt and difficulty. Whatever might be her birth, she had learned from Mrs Bellenden that an independence had been legally secured to her—and she knew enough of the law of the land to be aware that a provision was made to secure orphans and minors from oppression or spoliation. On this foundation she was employing herself at midnight —under a thatched shed, which scarcely kept out the beating wind, and drizzling rain that was falling—in rearing a superstructure ready for the moment when once she should have secured to herself a place where she might be fairly at liberty to act.

In the mean time, her companion had found her sister, and either from natural sympathy in the sufferings of the young lady, or owing to the nature of the arguments which had so effectually prevailed with her ambassador, she proved herself to be not only a ready, but an active agent in the service.

The absence of her husband, who was employed in the house, and had to await the arrival of certain night-coaches, left the coast clear for her

operations, and being fully acquainted with every part of the premises, she set about finding a more appropriate place of concealment and repose for the young lady, than the shed they had previously resorted to. The good woman knew of a room at the back part of the inn, which was easily accessible by a ladder from without, and which, from its remoteness from the general sleeping apartments, was never in use except when the house was very full. This, she was aware, was not the case to-night, at least up to the time when she had left the kitchen,—but she was not aware that at a still later one, not only had a family arrived, but Mr Rycott also, who was the most particular man in the world with respect to his bed, and that, in consequence of these events, Percy, who, as a peer, had been destined to the landlady's "best moreen," was, for the better accommodation of his *ci-devant* father, unceremoniously transferred from this bed of honor, to the more remote and less frequented room at the back of the house, as best suited to the altered or doubtful circumstances of his case.

The good woman, ignorant of all this, and

finding, as usual, part of the window left open—as a summary mode of keeping the assurance to the ear, that "the room was constantly aired,"—she concluded all was as she could have wished it to be, and her summons to her sister and Loo Bellenden to ascend a ladder she had at hand for the occasion, gave the first alarm to Percy, in consequence of which, he took the fatal resolution of seeking Lord Harweden's blue trunk in his sitting-room, and thus involved himself in all the horrors of civil, or, more properly speaking, domestic warfare, which had nearly terminated in his complete overthrow.

In the mean time, his absence confirmed all the speculations of the ostler's wife, who, having safely lodged her two protegées in the chamber, advised them to fasten the door—and, taking away the ladder, promised to provide, among some of her gossips in the neighbourhood, a more secure retreat—as a permanent place of concealment, until the young lady should have digested her future plans of operation. She pledged herself to return, and convey them to it, before day-break.

Miss Bellenden threw herself upon the bed, which the fatigues of the night had rendered a most welcome resource, and inviting her companion to do the same; sleep had nearly overcome them both, when footsteps approaching the door of the room, at such an hour of the night, very naturally excited their alarm. They listened—and from the consultation without, entertained not a doubt that they had been traced by Dr Beekerdyke or his emissaries, and that their recapture was at hand.

The girl, who was a stout hardy wench, and who had less to apprehend from being taken captive than her companion, whispered the latter to slip into some corner of the room, whilst she herself would endeavour to keep the intruders from forcing their way in.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT follows, the reader is already acquainted with, and Percy and his fair travelling companion found no small relief from the more grave and important points, which occupied a considerable portion of the journey towards the metropolis—in commenting upon the ridiculous details which had thus, in so extraordinary a manner, brought them together—and extricated one of the parties, at least, from a situation which, taken in all its bearings, must be allowed to have been one of the most embarrassing in which a girl, situated like Miss Bellenden, could well be involved. In the wide world she could claim the friendship and protection of one individual alone, and that one had dropt from the clouds, as it were, to rescue and preserve her, if necessary, against the world

in arms. This may be called strong language by some—and rank nonsense by others—but we are not responsible for it. It is merely the summary of what composed a train of congratulatory effusions, poured out in all the eloquence and amplification of a lover, between the seventy-ninth and sixtieth mile-stone on the high North Road—when a change of horses at the George, at Buckden, reminded Percy, from certain internal remonstrances, that his companion, who was no heroine of romance, might find some refreshment in the shape of breakfast—if not absolutely necessary, at least consolatory and refreshing. Descending, therefore, from the carriage, and his heroics at the same moment, he gave his orders with all the distinctness of a man of the world, and partook of the eggs and muffins, which Loo Bellenden was equally disposed to discuss—with many a matter-of-fact observation upon what was passing that would, if repeated, very seriously offend all those young ladies, who have no notion that lovers can be assailed by any of the ordinary wants, or demands of nature, which tend to

compromise the dignity of the rest of man and woman-kind.

But as it is our desire, as well as our interest, to please every order and description of readers, this sensitive portion of our fair friends may rest assured, that neither Percy Mallory nor Loo Bellenden shall be permitted to eat or drink—that is, in public—during the remainder of their journey—which, owing to the prodigious powers of somnolency, exhibited by the bodkin chaperon, was occupied, I am credibly informed, by one of the parties—not the sleeping one—by a display of sentiment, that would have done honor to Grandison himself, in one of his most oratorical moods. As to Loo Bellenden, Harriet Byron was an Ethiop to her.—What can we say more?—Nothing, but that the parties arrived safe, and without interruption, at the end of their journey, or, at least, in the outskirts of the town, when Percy directed the boys to drive straight to the house of my Lord Harweden.

When the carriage drew up to the door, there appeared to be persons unceremoniously passing backwards and forwards through the principal

entrance, and all the state and form, which Percy had observed in his former visit, superseded by that sort of indifference and confusion, which marks the absence of supreme command. His forebodings soon attributed the change to its true cause. The first inquiry informed him, that Lord Harweden had expired that morning, in consequence of another paralytic attack. The second disclosed to him, that Mr Dossiter was in possession of the house, as his Lordship's executor, and that he and his son were, at this moment, busily employed in sealing up his Lordship's drawers and papers.

Percy felt the difficulty of deciding, without preparation, upon the measures necessary to be pursued in this posture of affairs. He had neither right nor pretext for interfering with the Dossiters in the discharge of what might be—and which, at all events, he had no means of proving was not, their duty. It would be impossible, in such a moment, to enforce the claims of Miss Bellenden, whatever might be their nature,—and the indelicacy, independent of all other considerations, of bringing her into contact

with them, who had rendered themselves so personally obnoxious to her resentment, determined him upon taking the counsel of his pillow, if no better were to be found, before he proceeded to take any measures in the business.

With respect to the disposal of Miss Bellenden, he saw that decisive steps were immediately necessary; and fortunately, although he had not a choice of resources, he was the more readily enabled to fix upon one, which was not only unobjectionable, but which could not be exceeded by any advantages the whole range of London society could have afforded him.

He ordered the drivers to proceed to Lady Sarah Henessey's, and felt as secure and confident in her Ladyship's protection of his beloved travelling companion, as he was of her essential qualifications for the office. The peculiar situation of Miss Bellenden would have prevented her making objections to thus obtruding herself upon a perfect stranger, even if she had not felt, from Percy's description, that minds influenced by the genuine impulses of our nature, are drawn and attracted towards each other by sympathy, and that

Lady Sarah and herself would not be strangers, even on a first meeting.

Every thing turned out as had been anticipated; and Lady Sarah, who was fortunately at home, received—as a parent would a returning child—the friendless and amiable Loo Bellenden.

After the first ceremony of introduction and explanation was over, Percy made his apologies to her Ladyship for his apparent neglect in not having answered the note he had received just as he was leaving town, upon what had proved so propitious a mission. Her Ladyship, in turn, explained to him the cause of her writing, and of the sudden retreat of the De Lacy family, in pretty nearly the same terms in which we have ventured to anticipate it. The young lady's illness had been attributed to a disappointed passion, and the blood of the De Lacys boiled at the degeneracy of a daughter of "the house," who could look *downwards* with an eye of attachment—or descend to view, as a lover, any man whose ancestors could not be regularly traced to a period previous at least to the War of the

Roses. The friendship of Sir Hugh—and of Grandison, for Percy—which had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, had first taken root, when our young friend appeared as Mr Rycott's son and heir (who was *known to Sir Hugh as a branch of the Clarendon family*) was, in the generosity of their hearts, rather increased than weakened by the reverse of fortune which had despoiled him of his honors—but from that period—both—but particularly Sir Hugh, who deemed the passions, as well as the manners of mankind, subject to the laws of etiquette, considered an union between Percy and Gertrude de Lacy as much out of the question, as that the sun should deviate from his course, and make his appearance to-morrow morning in the west!

When the supposed discovery was, therefore, made, the poor girl's sufferings were ranked among those diseases of the mind to which, indeed, lenitives may be applied—but which forbid compliance with any of the disordered fancies or demands of the patient. There was, indeed, a fearful counterbalance of feeling in the opposite

scale, which rendered the regimen most afflicting to those who were called upon to practise it—but it was imperative, and no doubt or qualm could be admitted to interfere between the sufferings of an individual, and the common interests of all who were concerned in the pure transmission of the blood of the De Lacys to posterity.

Percy, as we have seen, was probed by his friend Grandison upon this delicate topic—and although he came out pure and clear from the ordeal, the latter dared not trust himself any longer to meet a man, who, even without intending it, had caused a sort of schism in a family whose orthodoxy was coëval with its antiquity. To remove Miss De Lacy from the scene of contagion, was the first measure that the wisdom of the internal cabinet suggested—and her physicians making no objection to her leaving town—the whole family, including even Grandison, were packed up, bag and baggage, and carried off to the only place in which they considered their charge could be safely deposited—the seat of their ancestors at Lacy Royal—where every re-

collection would add force to the family notions of what was due to the family blood.

Lady Sarah was too deeply interested in the fate of her young friend to part with her, until she had ascertained how she was likely to bear the journey, and had, therefore, taken charge of the invalid in her own carriage, and accompanied the party their first day's portion of it.

The air and motion of the conveyance appeared to produce the most favourable effect upon Gertrude's health—or at least upon her nerves—and Lady Sarah—the gentlest and kindest of human beings—thinking she perceived a wish on the part of her young companion to open her heart to her, as cautiously as tenderly led the way to it. Her Ladyship, in a very short time, ascertained that poor Percy must be fully acquitted of all part and share in the sufferings of Gertrude. She spoke of him as a brother whom she loved—but when Lady Sarah distantly alluded to feelings of a more tender nature in association with his name—she quickly perceived that if love was the young lady's disease, it must have been contracted in some other quarter. Further,

however, she could not penetrate, and this, her Ladyship informed Percy, was all that she could collect before her return to town—but—what, reader, will be thy feelings of sympathy and commiseration for the family of De Lacy when it is told—and told it must be, for the proceedings of such a family cannot be carried on in a corner—that two days after their arrival in their fasthold in the mountains of Cumberland, Miss De Lacy was missing—and whilst every wood and coppice were searched—and all the fish-ponds dragged—for derangement was the only view taken of the young lady's case—she having reached the Scottish border in company with the "innocent and harmless" shadow of her brother Grandison—was sacrificing all for love at the shrine of Hymen, under the plebeian substitute for the great patronymic De Lacy, of Mrs Birtwhistle! This is just one of those incidents which occur every day in the world, and at which, nevertheless, the world as constantly holds up its hands and cries, "Who would have thought it!"

But what, after all, can be more natural?—a girl, educated in perfect seclusion—ignorant of

life, as of the influence of the passions—thrown into the society of a young man, the friend, as she, knowing nothing about flappers or doubles, supposes him to be—selected as an object of attention for the first time—flattered by exclusive devotion, and excited by new sensations, which seemed to melt into life by being placed within the influence of a foreign sun—what, we ask, can be more natural than that this poor girl should be made captive to the designs of Mr Birtwhistle, who, whatever he might appear under the ludicrous pencil of Grandison—was a gentleman *apparently* of rank and fortune, and *positively* of good features and personable pretensions? There is always some danger in the calculations of vanity, and the inferences of conscious superiority. Birtwhistle was a man who might have measured intellect with his presumed protector, had he not, for his own purposes, consented to play second fiddle, and to follow him into society, where custom had forbidden him at once to take the lead. He had fortune, and through his patron the *entré* into high life. A fashionable wife would fix him there beyond the reach of fate—and his

patron had promised him even this, as the final consummation of his protectorship. Such things occur every day, and every hour, as any man may perceive who casts his eyes around him. Grandison did not condescend to forbid "such a person" aspiring to a daughter of the house of De Lacy, because such an egregious piece of presumption never occurred in a presentable shape to his imagination. Consequently, whenever the substance was engaged without his shadow—the services and attendance of the latter were still "with steady loyalty" taught to follow the "next of kin." Percy might, indeed, have proved a formidable rival to this young *aspirant*, but the beloved companion of her infancy was fixed in Gertrude's heart in brotherly union with Grandison—and his attentions received exactly in that tone of feeling in which they were paid.

Lady Sarah never felt occasion to interfere with Mr Birtwhistle's operations—for, even had his flirtation with her niece displayed anything of a marked nature in it, he appeared as the licensed friend, as he was the constant companion of her nephew—and whenever the latter wished to be

independent of his adjunct, he would without ceremony bid Gertrude and her Ladyship "entertain Birty, who was the best fellow in the world," —or "keep Birty to dinner, who would afford them ample amusement in his 'unavoidable' absence!" Her Ladyship's little select parties, which were constant during the season, afforded every opportunity to "the best fellow in the world," to render himself agreeable to the young lady—as neither of them joined the circle of the "Blues," —or the card-table, which together made up the occupations of Lady Sarah's evening conversazzione.

Percy, indeed, frequently presented himself as a third in the little party—but Birtwhistle quickly perceived he had no rival to encounter in him —and there was nothing in his presence which could interfere with his scheme, which was as ingeniously as successfully prosecuted, under the ordinary forms of social intercourse.

It was on the evening when Percy, describing all the doubts and perplexities of his own passion to Gertrude de Lacy, that she first discovered and acknowledged to herself—from the sudden

consciousness of the symptoms described, that she was indeed a victim to the same passion, and that her future happiness was in the hands and exclusively dependant upon her brother's friend, Mr Birtwhistle!

The subsequent illness of the young lady, although severe at first, had been rather exaggerated in the reports made to Percy, as a more decent plea for declining his visits, than a direct avowal of their suspicions—whilst the real cause of all the family embarrassments was suffered to come and go, just as he pleased, like a favourite poodle, whom every body tolerates for its master's sake—whom many like for its own monkey tricks—and whom nobody thinks of when they have anything else to think of or to do.

The conviction on the minds of all most concerned—after the young lady herself—that Percy was the object to be apprehended, afforded Birtwhistle still more frequent opportunities of communing with his love, than could otherwise, even among the most secure of those who consider rank and birth insurmountable barriers to plebeian pretensions, have been left open to him. To do

him justice, he made the most of his good fortune—and when he acknowledged to Gertrude, as he laid his pretensions and fortune at her feet, that if Sir Hugh were to demand his pedigree, he could scarcely trace a grandfather through the mist and obscurity of his genealogy, she saw, and confessed that their hopes were indeed desperate. We all know with what facility expedients are welcomed in the hour of despair—especially when they come, suggested as they did in the instance before us, by a friend, whose interests claim to be identified with our own!

To gain the consent of her family to such an union, was beyond the range of even possible calculation—to give up her first love—the being who alone could secure even a portion of happiness on this side the grave, was a hard alternative, in the event of yielding to the prejudices of her family.—This, when urged in the subdued tones, and with all the tenderness of a lover—for such, and a sincere one, we must honestly confess he was, afforded too powerful an argument to be resisted by one—who had been educated almost upon mechanical principles, and who, with all the

milder qualities of her nature, had been taught rather to obey than to reason, upon the few events in her short career of womanhood, which admitted of alternative or selection.

Grandison, who was to make up a part in the melancholy family procession to Lacy Royal, called for Birty, as he called for his gloves—and thus good-naturedly saved the happy bridegroom all the inconveniences of a northern trip, by setting him down almost at the door of the Temple of Hymen.

Such was the purport of Lady Sarah's communication to Percy—who felt for the family, and lamented the prejudices which would probably mar the future happiness of their daughter. The evil was without remedy—but the more evil consequences might be averted.

Grandison had pursued the fugitives—but, fortunately—because there is no saying into what excesses his irritable feelings might have hurried him—they had too many hours start of him. He had ascertained their marriage, and reflecting upon the irremediable nature of the calamity, and being entirely without a clew, when he had reach-

ed Edinburgh—he wrote a few hasty lines to his father, whom he could not bear to meet, since his own folly and vanity, in fact, were the cause of all the mischief which had ensued. Finding a vessel at Leith destined for the Baltic, he put himself on board, and fled from the consequences thus entailed upon him, which he feared to encounter among his old friends, in the shape of banter or reproach, for having been made the dupe of his own *butt!*

Percy, in his turn, acquainted Lady Sarah with the outlines of his own adventure, and leaving his fair companion to fill up the details, he took his leave of the ladies, in order to pursue such measures as might be found necessary, in consequence of Lord Harweden's death, and promised to see the ladies on the following morning.

CHAPTER IX.

PERCY now pursued his inquiries with unremitting diligence, and soon learned all that could be gleaned, as to the actual occurrences which had taken place during his short absence. The second attack of paralysis proved immediately fatal to Lord Harweden, and the elder Dossiter, who was in the house at the time, declaring himself executor according to his Lordship's will, in his possession, was without opposition admitted to the free exercice of his office, by servants who, for the greater part, were his own agents and dependants.

To check or control him and his son, who had joined him on his arrival from the north, was, Percy found, impracticable. He could only reach them through some regular and legal channel, and

for this purpose hastened to his old friend, Mr Spencer, the Special Pleader, under whom he had been placed on his first arrival in London.

To him he related every thing that had passed between Lord Harweden and himself—and the detail of his adventures in the progress of his late journey, as well as the circumstances connected with Miss Bellenden's caption, detention, and escape. The lawyer listened with attention to the recital. He knew the Dossiters well—and saw that the strongest and most prompt measures were necessary in order to counteract their schemes, unless the infatuation of their late employer had armed them with a power against which it might be impossible to contend. As a preliminary measure, he advised, that the claim of Miss Bellenden should be immediately brought forward, and as they were entitled—after the communication of Lord Harweden, to infer that this was for some purpose or other, hereafter to be explained, an assumed name—that the claim should be made out under the style and title of Lady Louisa Clarendon.

Percy still hesitated to examine the papers con-

tained in the blue trunk, which had so strangely fallen into his hands, although he felt justified in retaining them for the benefit of Miss Bellenden, should they be driven to extremities by the chicanery of the Dossiters.

Mr Spencer, as the official agent of Lady Louisa Clarendon, took the necessary steps to establish the pretensions of Loo Bellenden to that title, and the property which was attached to it—trusting rather to the light which might be thrown upon the subject by the answers which should be put in, than to any actual information beyond that of Lord Harweden's verbal communication to Percy.

In this he was disappointed—for, within a few hours after the delivery of his notice to Mr Clement Dossiter, he received a note from that gentleman, simply stating his general ignorance of the existence of any such person as Lady Louisa Clarendon; and the necessity of waiving all discussion connected with the affairs of Lord Harweden until after the funeral, when his Lordship's will would be opened.

In the mean time, Chancery lawyers were con-

sulted as to the practicability of making Miss Bellenden a ward of that Court—but the difficulty of proving her legitimacy presented a formidable bar to the assumption of even a title of courtesy; and under the name of Bellenden she would have no ground of proceeding against the representatives of her late father, if such he should eventually prove to have been.

It was resolved, therefore, to await the event of the opening of the will—and the only requisition made by Percy's lawyer was, that, as the representative of Lady Louisa Clarendon, known by the name of Miss Louisa Bellenden, he should be present at the reading. A civil assent was returned to this—and the day appointed for the ceremony was at the same time communicated to Mr Spencer.

Loo Bellenden, supported by Lady Sarah, felt not only equal to the task of meeting the inquiry, but expressed her determination to pursue it until she should be relieved from all suspense on the question of her birth, and if she could not shake off the obloquy which had hitherto galled and wounded her high spirit, to ascertain at least the

full extent of the evil under which she was condemned to suffer.

On the day appointed, Mr Spencer attended at the house of Lord Harweden, and was received with perfect civility by Mr Dossiter, who conducted him to the library, where the principal servants, and some other persons whose business there was not so evident, were in attendance.

At the head of a table, round which these persons were assembled, was an arm-chair, evidently placed there for some person who was yet to make his appearance, for Mr Dossiter and his son, with papers and parchments, and boxes before them, had taken their station at the bottom of the table, but were still standing, and in the act of waiting for some superior authority to open their proceedings.

At length, the folding doors from the adjoining apartment were thrown open, and an elderly gentleman in deep mourning, slightly bowing to the company, took his seat in the vacant chair, and made a sign to Mr Dossiter to proceed in the business for which they were assembled.

Mr Dossiter broke the seals of the cover which inclosed the will.

On perceiving another sealed inclosure, he started, and evidently changed colour. He paused for a moment, and turned his eye upon his son, who stood looking over his shoulder.

"Proceed, Mr Dossiter," said the gentleman somewhat impatiently, who appeared to preside.

"It is superscribed, my Lord,—'*To be opened only in the presence of my Brother, the Earl of Harweden.*'"

"Well, Sir—and I am here to warrant your breaking the seal."—Mr Dossiter could no longer delay, and removing the impediment, began to read.

The will opened like most wills, that are technically drawn up, and Mr Dossiter began to read with a rapid and clerk-like sort of articulation—which seems to take for granted all that is to be rehearsed and recited until the more important specifications are to be more elaborately enunciated. This, however, did not seem to satisfy his Lordship, who waved his hand for the lawyer to stop—and observed, that, probably Mr Dossiter had previously read the will, and was master of its contents.

"Not of the will, my Lord," was the answer; "but the rough copy which I drew up under the late Lord Harweden's instructions."

"That is pretty nearly the same thing, Sir—we, to whom this advantage does not extend, must entreat you will read it more distinctly—and first, Sir, the date, if you please."

"Certainly, my Lord—unquestionably—the date—the date is—here is some—some mistake—it purports to be dated as late as the fifteenth of last month, whereas ——"

"We have only to do, Sir," observed his Lordship somewhat sternly—"We have only to do with the document before us—you will, therefore, Mr Dossiter, be pleased to read on."

"Certainly, my Lord—only—Clarendon, let me see the envelope—it is docqueted—hey!"

"In your own hand-writing," observed the son, with a look that seemed to stagger the worthy lawyer.

"Proceed, Sir," cried Lord Harweden, "or deliver the parchment to be read by that gentleman," pointing to Mr Spencer, "who professes to be the agent of a client in the clouds. He will,

at least, read intelligibly, and he looks—as if he would read straight forward."

Mr Dossiter bowed, but did not offer to resign his office, although it appeared every moment to become more and more irksome. He read more slowly, indeed, than the check he had originally received seemed to warrant. The words ran thus, after the preliminary vouchers before alluded to touching the faith, and the sanity of the testator—

"To atone in some measure, however inadequately, for the criminal and crooked policy through which I have been induced to injure and wrong those, whose natural claims ought to have secured to them my best offices, and kindest affections; and to inflict the penalty of their crimes upon those, who, having subjected me to their control by a sense of my own degrading subserviency to their schemes,—I hereby, in the first instance, revoke and cancel all former wills, or codicils, or testamentary dispositions whatever, which I may have been induced to subscribe, confirming this to be my last and final will, touching the disposal of all my property, as well real as per-

sonal, of which I may be possessed at the time of my death."

Mr Dossiter had, by a strong effort, contrived to read so far, although half suffocated apparently by it—but, with the close of the sentence, ended even the possibility of a further struggle, and he would have fallen, had not his son caught him in his arms, and placed him in his chair.

"Mr Spencer," said Lord Harweden, addressing that gentleman, without vouching an observation, or even a look of sympathy, upon the fainting lawyer—"will *you* do us the favour to become Mr Dossiter's substitute? It is possible you may not be so interested for a living client as that gentleman appears to be for a defunct one."

Dossiter attempted to speak.—His son, Clarendon, offered to undertake the task in which his father had failed. Lord Harweden looked only for Mr Spencer's assent to his requisition, and then desired the papers to be transferred to him.

After stating in substance the causes and circumstances which led to the adoption of the scheme to secure a male heir, in his own line, to

the family title and property, the will of Lord Harweden goes on to relate more in detail the removal of his infant daughter to the charge of Mr Clement Dossiter, declaring the person called, and known by the name of Loo or Louisa Bellenden, to be his lawful child—and as such, legally entitled, upon her coming of age, to certain estates, rent charges, &c. therein enumerated and specified—" Mr Clement Dossiter"—it proceeds to say—" is in possession of every requisite document to establish her just and legitimate claims, although, from time to time, and under various pretexts, he has delayed to place them in my hands."

" The case of your client, Sir," observed Lord Harweden to the reader, " seems to improve.—Mr Dossiter will have no objection to furnish such documents—or if he does ——"

Dossiter, for the first time, lifted his eyes towards the speaker;—

" They *may* not be forthcoming, my Lord," said he, in a low and tremulous tone, as if he doubted whether his *bidding* would be taken.

" I understand you, Mr Dossiter—Proceed,

Sir," added his Lordship, addressing Mr Spencer.

A will is not a very interesting document to those who are not expectants—we shall, therefore, simply observe that, as the one in question was intended to operate as a sponge upon the proceedings of the noble testator, for nearly twenty years of his life, it was not only what the Americans would call *lengthy*—but what every body present—with, perhaps, two exceptions, in which the Messrs Dossiters were certainly not included—might call rather prolix and prosy.—For our purpose, and for that of our readers, it is sufficient to know that, after exposing many of the schemes of the Dossiters, with proofs and references for the instruction of his heir, Lord Harweden devises the whole of his unentailed property, real and personal, to his brother and successor, with the exception of ten thousand pounds to his daughter, which had originally been settled upon her, when her alienation from her family had been considered irrevocable. His Lordship assigns a double motive, as operating upon him in this disposition of his property.—First, because the

fortune of his daughter is considerable, and apparently more than ought, with propriety, be entrusted to a young woman, naturally of a weak and nervous habit, and, for some time past, unfortunately subject to mental aberration.—At this part, Lord Harweden turned to Mr Dossiter, and asked——

"Whether this unfortunate young Lady were past all hopes?"

"I can answer that question, my Lord," said Mr Spencer with a smile.

"I would rather Mr Dossiter answered it," was the dry reply.

"My answer," replied that worthy gentleman, still in a subdued tone, "must depend upon circumstances—she has lately evaded her keepers."

"Then she must be desperate, indeed," observed his Lordship—and the order of the day was continued.

The other motive assigned for this disposition of the property, was the desire of making a peace-offering to an injured and offended brother, whom a first crime had alienated from his affections, and

a second justly incurred his contempt and indignation.

This was the only part of the will, which appeared to have any effect upon the feelings of the new peer—and he seemed as sedulous to conceal what he felt, as Mr Dossiter himself, who, however, did not succeed quite so well.

The ceremony being concluded, his Lordship addressed Mr Spencer in a tone, which would admit of several interpretations, but none of a very conciliatory cast. He observed, that he was disposed to pay every attention to the wishes of his late brother—but that it could not be expected the claims of a daughter, whose existence was unknown to the world only a few weeks since, should be admitted, without proofs incontrovertible of her identity, to the possession of so considerable a portion of the property of the family, "of which I now must," said he, "consider myself not only the representative—but the trustee.—I am sure," and he threw a glance of deep intelligence at the elder Dossiter, "the late Lord Harweden's agent *even* will admit the justice of a demur ——"

"Enough—enough, my Lord," cried Dossiter, with restored animation, after so long a suspension; "you are, beyond a doubt, justified"—and, with his habitual caution, he looked round to catch the effect of his Lordship's observation, and his own reply, upon the countenances of his auditors.—He was not quite pleased with the movement of the muscles on that of Mr Spencer—and added, apparently on this account——

"I speak as a lawyer, Mr Spencer."

"And will, no doubt, act accordingly."——But Lord Harweden put a stop to the conversation, by the dry observation, that "he believed there was nothing further to detain the gentlemen;" adding, "Mr Dossiter will hear from me"—this was said in a very marked tone, which the lawyer seemed to understand, and his Lordship bowed—and retired.

When Mr Spencer, upon his return, reported to Percy what had passed at the meeting, it is difficult to say, whether he was most surprised or indignant. The existence of a direct heir to the title was, indeed, a matter of astonishment; but the evident collusion attempted to be practised by this person, in conjunction with Dossiter,

—whom, from the exposure in the will itself, he must know to be a villain—was not to be borne with patience or forbearance. The will of Lord Harweden was a sufficient authority, on which to appeal to the Lord Chancellor for his protection, and he directed Mr Spencer to take such measures as might afford his more than ever interesting charge the full advantage of that paternal regard and solicitude, evinced by the constitution, for the rights and property of those, who, from their youth, or unprotected situation, are disqualified from upholding or defending them.

It will not be supposed that Percy returned to his chambers, before he had paid a visit to Lady Sarah Henessey's, in Seymour Place—or that, having been prevailed upon to stay dinner, he left anything untold or unsaid, that could be told or said upon so interesting a topic as her own affairs, to Loo Bellenden—or as we, who are acquainted with facts without entangling ourselves in questions of legal proof and identity, may call her, Lady Louisa—or Lady Loo Clarendon. Night, however, will come—and lovers, as well as mere mortal men, must sleep, and must go home

to do so. It was, however, twelve o'clock before he reached the Temple—and in his wicket he found a card of Mr Rycott's—with a pencil memorandum, that he would call again at eleven o'clock on the succeeding morning. Percy wished he had rather left his address—as the hour would probably interfere with the arrangements he might have to make with his lawyers. To meet Mr Rycott, however, had been his wish for some days past, and he had been surprised that he had not before received some notification of his being in town. Money, more than he could command, might, he felt, be necessary to carry on the proceedings in Lady Louisa's cause—and upon such an occasion, all the delicacy which he would have felt in seeking pecuniary aid for himself, was absorbed in the paramount consideration of obtaining redress for an injured and oppressed orphan —at least, so he reasoned—and the possibility of being influenced by passion, never once occurred to his mind, whilst it was settling itself down to the resolution of making Mr Rycott a party to his benevolent purpose.

Eleven o'clock came, and with it Mr Rycott

punctual to his appointment—but he had not been long in the room, before Percy, from certain well known symptoms, almost wished he had been accompanied by his travelling supplement, Meinheer Schwartz, with a phial or two extraordinary of soothing sedatives. He, indeed, expressed himself glad to see his *ci-devant* son—but talked himself into a rage for having been left in the lurch so unceremoniously at Stamford. He could not deny that the plea of favouring the escape of Miss Bellenden was a legitimate one, but that placing her under his care and guardianship, would have answered the same purpose, and have avoided the indecorum of having travelled ninety miles in her company. He did not condemn the zeal evinced by Percy in the prosecution of her claims against Dossiter, and the newly found Earl of Harweden—but he reminded him that he was exhausting his own funds, which he was too proud to replenish at the expence of his friends, and that, if he got his nose into Chancery, it was like a mouse-trap, which every attempt to retreat from would only serve to goad the

poor captive on, until he was fairly caged, and rivetted in on every side.

"Besides," added he, "you know nothing of this Lord, who, for aught you can prove to the contrary, may be disposed, upon hearing the whole case, to do justice by the girl."

"What!—When he openly invited that villain Dossiter to suppress the evidence of her legitimacy?"

"Aye, aye—that may be your way of telling the story—but what is become of the box—this blue trunk you were speaking of?"

"It is there, Sir,"—pointing to a book-shelf on which it lay.

"Let's see it—it may tell us."

"I am doubtful, Sir—whether in propriety ——"

"Propriety!—fiddle-stick—By Jove! Sir, you may have the very evidence you are making such a fuss about under your own lock and key. Hey, what's the blockhead staring at?—By the Lord Harry! you are a pretty fellow to encounter such adversaries as these Dossiters!"

"It is not because they are unprincipled, that I ——"

"Should turn their own weapons upon them! —Psha!—give it to me, Sirrah—not a syllable—call up my carriage—give me the key. By Jove! I have a lawyer will untie this knot in half the time your Spencers, and their squeamish clients, like Mr Percy Ry——, confound it—Mallory!"

"But, consider, Sir ——"

"By Jove! Sir, I will not consider—I never considered in my life without committing some blunder—here, Sirrah—draw upon me at Messrs Drummonds—your drafts will be answered to any amount—not a word—by Jove! I will be obeyed!" —and with more alacrity, though with the same tenaciousness of opinion which had ever characterized his proceedings, he took the blue trunk under his arm, regardless of Percy's remonstrances, and entered his carriage, which immediately drove off.

Percy lost no time in proceeding to Mr Spencer's house. That gentleman had been actively employed in his service during the whole morning—so much so, indeed, that an appointment

had been made by the Chancellor for a meeting with his counsel on the succeeding day.

Percy was not a little puzzled, nor a little surprised to find, in the course of the afternoon, upon his return to chambers, two notes from Mr Rycott, the one in the usual authoritative style of paternity, forbidding him to proceed farther in the business until he should see or hear from him—and the other, dated about two hours subsequently, appointing a meeting with him and Mr Spencer, at Percy's chambers, on the following morning at twelve—where "he would himself attend with his own lawyer, the man in England most capable of bringing the affair to a right issue."

To oppose Mr Rycott, would have been so contrary to the habits of his life, which the sudden re-union with him had brought back in all their original force—that Percy only turned his thoughts to the best mode of reconciling the contending arrangements—for twelve o'clock was the hour appointed by the Chancellor—and Mr Spencer was necessarily to be in attendance.—Mr Rycott, he was aware, would be the more deter-

mined in his opinion in proportion to the strength of the obstacle opposed to it—besides, in neither of his notes had he indicated his place of residence—nor had Percy recollected to make the inquiry during their short and agitated interview of the morning.—Fortunately, in the heat of this dilemma, between the horns of which he was tossed to and fro, like a shuttle-cock, Mr Spencer himself made his appearance, and with a look of disappointment, informed Percy, that the Chancellor being obliged to attend a Council at Windsor on the following day, the meeting was necessarily postponed. He was surprised in turn at the tokens of satisfaction displayed by Percy, at what, he conceived, would have sent him dancing round the room in a fever of disappointment; but when he understood the cause of this change, he agreed, that if any dependance could be had upon the judgment of Mr Rycott in such a cause, the delay might be advantageous, inasmuch as the more the evidence could be cleared, before it was laid before the Chancellor, the more influence it would, of course, have upon his Lordship's decision.

Percy shrugged his shoulders—and the parties separated, the one to prepare such papers as might be necessary for the proposed meeting—the other to communicate with his fair principal, whom he found it necessary to consult at the great expence of shoe-leather—or coach-hire at least three times a-day—and not unfrequently four, when the business thickened upon them. He was, on this occasion, however, doomed to disappointment; for, on his arrival at Seymour Place, Miss Bellenden, as she was still called, was from home—and Lady Sarah either could not, or would not, afford any rational plea for her absence. Indeed, there appeared to be some degree of confusion in her Ladyship's manner, which, contrasted with her usual and habitual candour of character, could not pass unnoticed by so interested an observer as Percy Mallory. He shortened his visit, and was not solicited to extend it—he had intended to be over-persuaded to stay dinner—but although now near six o'clock, not a suggestion from her Ladyship had ever looked that way. He was extremely indignant—but he knew not precisely with whom—and had nearly

involved himself in a duel, by sitting down at a table in Steven's Coffee-room, pre-occupied by another gentleman, and snuffing out both the candles in a fit of absence.

Fortunately the gentleman was of a placable disposition, and Percy was not so insensible to the value of his own life, under existing circumstances, as to risk it in an attempt to shoot a man, because he preferred light to darkness—even if he had been disposed to resent, what might have easily been made, as Sir Lucius O'Trigger would have had it—"a mighty pretty sort of a quarrel."

He recalled his scattered thoughts sufficiently to make the necessary apology for his inadvertency—and either his own stomach, or a sympathy occasioned by what was passing around him, seized upon the occasion to suggest the fitness of the time for supplying the wants of nature—and having no reasonable argument at hand to invalidate the intimation, and much to enforce it, he very liberally added a bottle of claret to the demand, and went home to his chambers in infinitely better humour than he had originally set out for them.

CHAPTER X.

We have not thought it necessary to break the thread of our narrative with an account of Blencow's return to the service, or, as Percy would have termed it, to the protection of that young gentleman—but he had, as a matter of course, sought shelter in his friend's chambers, when ejected from office in Chancery Lane—and remained ready and willing to perform all the little services of an attendant that Percy would authorize. Percy, indeed, had other matters to think of since his return to town, and Blencow had, in a great measure, settled down, with little opposition, into what, to all intents and purposes, and to his entire satisfaction, might be considered a regular domestic.

With all the ceremony, therefore, of an experienced groom of the chambers, he broke in upon a reverie, in which Percy had been indulging after breakfast the next morning, by announcing Mr Rycott, who followed Blencow into the room, with the blue trunk under his arm, a blue bag in his hand, and a fidgetty sort of importance in his countenance, at least half an hour before the time of his appointment.

"Percy—you must send off to this Mr Spencer—to prevent his coming—that is, until we want him ——"

"Will it not appear odd ——"

"Confound appearances—by Jove! you are the same obstinate fellow you always were—send this lad—do as I bid you, Sirrah—it is necessary. —When you see my man of business, who is waiting in the carriage, you will agree with me ——"

And Percy, as usual, was compelled, however reluctantly, to obey—but as Blencow, after receiving his directions, was about to run off, Mr Rycott bad him send up the gentleman who was waiting in the carriage. In a few minutes, a gentle knock at the door was heard—and Percy,

with his natural urbanity, was flying to open it, when Mr Rycott checked him, and in a voice of unusual sternness, cried, "Come in." The door slowly opened, and, to Percy's utter astonishment, and no slight disgust, Mr Clement Dossiter—not with his wonted confidence—not with the searching eye, which seemed for ever penetrating into the bosom of his neighbours—not with that air of mysterious consequence which was intended to mislead, and to confound trifles with matters of importance, so as to distract the penetration, and divert the attention of his auditors—but with a downcast eye, and a nerveless bend of his body, that spoke acquiescent despair, and entire submission to his fate, slid, or rather crept, into the room.

Mr Rycott took no notice of his abject appearance—but pointing to a chair which he had himself placed at the table, desired him to be seated.

"Mr Percy Mallory," said he, with more form, and more of forbearing dignity than was usual with the old gentleman, "you are already aware of the debt of obligation which you owe to this person—but as it is out of his power to make

either you or me reparation, we will waive this head of his offence. His wickedness and cunning are alike baffled in remedying the evils they have occasioned—and as my agent—my confidential man of business for twenty years,"—the old gentleman spoke this with bitterness—" I leave him to settle his accounts as he may with his conscience and his God—but, by—no—I am wrong," —and he bowed, as if apologizing, to Percy, for having momentarily forgotten himself—" there are other accounts for which he can afford vouchers, but which, as a proof of his long known zeal for the house of Harweden, he would have sacrificed in favour of the present Lord.—Am I, or am I not, justified in the assertion, Sir?" addressing Dossiter, who only bowed assent.

" Well, Mr Percy Mallory," again seeming to brace himself up to the sticking point of dignity, " these vouchers were promised—pledged to the noble Lord—but another rogue, it appears from this worthy person's statement, stept in, and stole them."

" I have amended that ——"

"Silence! Sir," and again Mr Rycott had nearly lost his balance.

"That rogue, Mr Percy Mallory, was *you*."

Percy was on his legs in a moment.

"Sit down—sit——I beg, Mr Percy Mallory, you will not interrupt me—but simply inform me, in the hearing of this person, how you came in possession of this blue trunk."

Percy related all the circumstances connected with the affair.

"Have you anything, Mr Clement Dossiter, to urge which may invalidate this statement?"

"Invalidate!" exclaimed Percy.

"By Jove.! Sir—I will not—will not—Sit quietly in your chair—and allow me to receive this worthy person's answer."

"Nothing, Sir."

"You admit, then, you—Psha!—In that trunk, Mr Percy Mallory, are all the vouchers necessary to establish the claims of your—your friend Miss Bellenden"—and the old gentleman smiled for the first time—"to the rank and inheritance derived from her father, the late Earl of Harweden. You were fortunate, Sir—very fortunate,

in having thus accidentally possessed yourself of them—or, by Jove !—pish !—I mean they would by this time have been at the disposal of the present Lord, whose character, if it may be inferred from the previous knowledge had of it by this—this person would have disposed of them in a very different manner—hey, Mr—Mister Dossiter !"

Dossiter only moved as a man may be supposed to do who is sitting upon a bed of thorns or nettles.

" But I believe I am now at liberty," continued Mr Rycott, " even with the permission of this person, to place these documents in the hands of Lady Louisa Clarendon's agent."

At the sound of the name—or the association it produced from being for the first time coupled with its legitimate title in his presence, Dossiter half raised his eye—and almost started as he did so.

" Am I justified in so doing, Sir ?"

" Perfectly."

" And you acknowledge ——"

" Every thing."

" And now, Mr Percy Mallory—if you will al—

low your servant to direct my carriage to Mr Spencer's chambers, it will enable him the sooner to take charge of these papers, and at the same time terminate an interview, which, judging by my own feelings, is not particularly agreeable to any of the parties concerned."

A convulsive motion of Dossiter's head seemed to nod assent—and the messenger was despatched. In the mean time, Mr Rycott drew forth from his blue bag several large pacquets of paper and parchment, docqueted, and carefully bound with red tape—which he noted and placed on the table before him. Percy, who thought of nothing but the victory achieved in favour of his beloved charge, paced the room with hasty steps, and Mr Rycott himself, had he attended to him, would, or might have inferred, that he was the person to whom the protracted scene was the most irksome—irritating as might be the restraint imposed upon himself by the dignified Mr Rycott—or afflictive, as certainly was his pilloried exposure to Mr Clement Dossiter.

This trial of patience, however, was soon at an end, and more quickly even than an absent lover

might have calculated the moments, Mr Spencer was announced, and advanced into the apartment with a general bow, that kept his head in an inclined posture until he was almost in contact with Mr Rycott, and Mr Lawyer Dossiter.

Percy was disposed to smile at the look of amazement with which he first viewed the lugubrious visage of the crest-fallen lawyer—but it was checked by his still more strongly expressed admiration on seeing Mr Rycott—and by the exclamation which followed—

"Your Lordship here!"

"You see, Percy," cried his long-supposed father—"the honors that are thrust upon me"—this was uttered with an accompanying smile—but a cloud—and perhaps what clouds usually produce followed, when he added, "And for thee, Percy—my boy—only were they cherished in anticipation—but this viper, who corrupted the heart of a man born for better things—not content with robbing me of the child whom Heaven granted to my prayers, and blasting his prospects here and perhaps hereafter, dashed my fond hopes with a phantom whom I cherished, and

found the very form and substance of Virtue, only to see it flit away, and elude my paternal grasp. Yet, Percy—you are all that is left to me—be to me a son—do not desert me," and the old man looked the spirit of desolation.

" Never, Sir," and Percy was folded in his embrace.

The latter, however, soon recovered himself, and doubly angry, if possible, with Dossiter for being witness to such a scene, he most peremptorily commanded him to proceed to business with Mr Spencer. The regular surrender and necessary attestations respecting the documents connected with the birth of Lady Louisa were soon completed—but there were other papers and parchments, concerning which Mr Rycott, or rather Lord Harweden, gave such prompt instructions as were necessary to Mr Spencer acting as his agent—and which served to retrieve considerable property, which a few hours would for ever have transferred from the Clarendon family, had not the fraudulent means by which it had been involved been developed by the contents of the blue trunk.

The young Dossiter, as we have seen, left this sacred depository of his father's confidential papers behind him at Stamford. It had been entrusted to his care, for the special purpose of enabling him to baffle any attempt that might be made to establish the claims of Lady Louisa Clarendon, should Lord Harweden, suspicious of his mission, have called upon the elder Dossiter to produce the papers, which were known to be in his possession. It was, therefore, of importance to Clarendon to have them with him, for the double purpose of eluding any attempt to get possession of them previous to his marriage, and of producing them immediately after it, if necessary, to establish her claims, which, by this event, would be transferred to himself. The other documents in the trunk had been collected in a passing visit—as Clarendon pursued his journey northwards—to Lord Harweden's estates in Yorkshire—which, together with the instructions despatched by the father, rendered the chain of evidence against the conspirators complete. It is not to he supposed that the loss, when discovered, was patiently submitted to; but Clarendon,

fatigued by his rapid journey, and the little rest afforded either to his fair companion or himself, had, soon after his being seated in the mail, and freed from the apprehension of encountering Percy, fallen into a profound slumber, from which he did not awake until within a few stages of London. From Stevenage, whilst they were changing horses, Clarendon, who, from his father's despatch, knew that his presence was essentially necessary to their schemes in London, hired an express, and addressed the strongest injunctions to the Stamford landlord, to take charge of the trunk, which he remembered to have left in a specified spot in the bar—but receiving no account of it, in the course of the following day, and the death of Lord Harweden rendering it more than ever necessary, if not to the furtherance of their schemes, at least to their security, he himself set off for Stamford, and only returned from his bootless errand in time to be present at the opening of the will.

The history of Mr Rycott, or, more properly, referring to the period, Mr Levison Clarendon, is contained in a few words. His brother and

himself were rivals in the affections of an heiress; and either through the ambition of the lady, or, as he had some reason to suspect, the intrigues of his own family, she gave her hand to the peer, after having assured his younger brother of the possession of her heart. The reader will give him credit for a certain irritability of temper, which even the calm of retirement was never able to extinguish—and the opposition and disappointment of his wishes in the first object of a young man's hopes, turned the current inward, and having in his boyish days seduced a young woman from her paternal roof—the daughter of a respectable yeoman on one of his father's estates—he returned to her in his fit of desperation, married her, and hurrying off to the wilds of Cumberland, determined to bury himself and his cares in a voluntary banishment from the world. There he lived in a state of constant regret and irritation at the imprudent rashness of a marriage, opposed to all the most inveterate prejudices of his life, as well as his better judgment—and equally unproductive of everything that could tend to counteract the evil, by securing to him a companion conge-

nial with his views of domestic happiness. The birth of a son, after the loss of several other children, was not sufficiently influential on his mind to calm and subdue it to a philosophical endurance of the ills to which he had subjected himself by *one false step in the outset of life*—but it served to concentrate all the affections of his soul, and he loved the boy with an intenseness of affection, quite in keeping with his natural character, but which it was a constant effort with him to keep in check, as if ashamed of betraying tenderness even for his child. He assumed the name of a female branch of his family—gave out that he had left the country—and entrusted his secret alone to Clement Dossiter—as a young man, who, born and educated under the roof and patronage of his family, had always expressed himself devoted to his interests—and was therefore thought worthy of his entire confidence. Dossiter, at the time, might have been sincere in the professions of his attachment, but want of principle, which his father, intent only on making the most of a profitable employment, to which, from a subordinate situation, he had been raised

by the former Lord Harweden, took no pains to supply—and a quick perception of his own interests, as opportunities presented themselves in the shape of temptations, involved him in a succession of intrigues and chicanery which finally ended in the climax we have just witnessed.

One only glimmering of principle, or of attachment to the family, could be perceived through the whole series of misadventures in which he, for his own interests, had involved it. He had sacredly preserved Levison Clarendon's secret. Indeed, he had no temptation to betray it, as it was his policy to keep the brothers separate—and the late Lord Harweden was fully persuaded to the last that his brother was still living abroad, although, as he was aware, purposely concealing the place of his residence from him. When, therefore, the idea first suggested itself to the mind of the late Lord Harweden, in revenge for the indignity *he* had offered to his brother, in robbing him of the object of his affections—for that is the fair mode of stating the operation of the human mind in such exigencies—and Dossiter not only closed with his proposals, but urged him on to the exe-

cution of the plan, in order that he might have the future mastery over him,—the lawyer, who had received from Levison, together with some commissions for the occasion, the information of the expected *accouchement* of his wife, determined, if the one brother should be disappointed of a male heir, the other should be able to supply the deficiency, that this arrangement should be made in order to enable him, should it hereafter be his policy, to render justice to all parties, and thus ensure his peace with the adverse one, should the stream of Fortune change her current, or in any contingency expose him to a penalty for having engaged in so nefarious a transaction.

We have seen the result of all these intricate intrigues, and we may infer the folly of building, upon such rotten foundations, schemes of futurity, in which, when Providence deigns not to interfere, she permits the agents themselves to pull the baseless fabric about their own ears.

CHAPTER XI.

When Mr Rycott, or, as we must now call him, Lord Harweden, upon his arrival in town, received the account of his brother's death, the indignation which he was ready to pour forth upon him for the felonious abduction of his child, and the fatal issue of his treachery, was turned into sincere sorrow at the retrospect of a life past in family disunion, and regret that the object of ambition, which he had only coveted for the sake of his Percy, was now useless, and, under his present circumstances, a burthen to him.

When, however, the story of Miss Bellenden's claims, represented under the most unfavourable circumstances by Mr Dossiter, came to be heard, he felt a new interest awakened—and the favourable impression she had made upon his mind,

previous to her leaving Cumberland, together with her undeniable attachment to Percy, conjured up something in his imagination which served almost to realize the hopes which the fatal discovery of Percy's birth had so completely extinguished.

It would be no difficult matter, he conceived, considering the influence of his family connections, to have the title, with the fortune, entailed upon the husband of his niece, the only representative of the family—and cheering himself with this picture, he would not suffer either the difficulties which obviously stood in the way—nor the influence of the plebeian descent of poor Percy, upon his aristocratic feelings, to interpose or check his glowing career of speculation. To Dossiter, however, he was perfectly silent. He had fully discovered the character of that gentleman, which Percy's previous epistolary communications had not a little tended to elucidate—but as the full extent of his operations were yet obscured, he resolved to bear with him for a time, not doubting, that with such a man more insight into his schemes would be obtained by appearing

to be a dupe, than by any overt acts of defiance, which might have a tendency to put him on his guard.

The ingratitude of Percy, in espousing the cause of a girl, who was evidently an adventurer, against his patron, was most diligently urged by the lawyer—and when his Lordship quietly intimated that the young man was altogether ignorant of his claim or accession to the title—and, consequently, of his being opposed to his old friend and protector, the lawyer smiled an intimation, which might have satisfied any man not acquainted with him, that Percy was as fully informed of the fact as himself.

We have seen, how, in accordance with this mode of proceeding, Lord Harweden conducted himself upon the occasion of the reading of the will—and the encouragement given to Dossiter's advances to betray the trust reposed in him, respecting the claims of Loo Bellenden. His Lordship conceived, that, being in possession of these important documents, he would annex to the surrender of them, conditions with which neither his honor nor his interest could induce him to com-

ply—and that, by suffering him, at all events, to commit himself to the full extent of his own intentions, he should be able to involve the skilful manœuvrer in his own toils.

When, however, after his interview with Percy, he found—upon reference to the contents of the blue box—that he was himself in possession not only of every document necessary to establish the claims of the young heiress—but of instruments, and confidential notices, both of the father and the son, sufficient to bring them within the precincts of the Old Bailey, he could no longer abide by the cold suggestions of policy, but sending for the crafty lawyer, poured out upon him, in an ample torrent, the abundance of his wrath, and indignation, and contempt, and what was more moving in its effects upon the culprit, his intention of public exposure and condign punishment. Dossiter made one desperate effort in charging Percy with having stolen the trunk through the agency of Blencow, when acting as his clerk—but, in two words, the real fact laid open this masked battery, and in the most abject manner, the man of law threw himself uncondi-

tionally upon the mercy of the being whom he had so cruelly and basely injured—and still had hoped to make subservient to his interests. Lord Harweden's disinclination to expose to the world the share his late brother had in the transactions of this unprincipled agent, was his best safeguard and guarantee against criminal prosecution.

What followed may be easily traced by the reader—and such papers as were necessary to be cancelled, and others signed in the shape of releases, having been duly arranged under Lord Harweden's directions, between Mr Spencer and Mr Dossiter, the latter was permitted to depart; and after Percy had, unrestrained by his presence, given full vent to his feelings in congratulating Lord Harweden upon his new honors, and the early use to which he had applied them, he was permitted to scamper off to his late travelling companion, to pour into her ear all the wonderful events—and the satisfactory results of the morning meeting.

She was, however, prepared for all that he had to communicate—and she now accounted for

her absence on the preceding day—and for the rare neglect of hospitality on the part of her amiable protectress, by acknowledging, that she was at the moment closeted, and receiving the important and interesting communication from Lord Harweden himself.

CHAPTER XII.

THAT Percy's feelings, powerfully as they had been excited, were disinterested, will be readily admitted, when it is known, that at every advance towards the attainment and security of Lady Louisa Clarendon's claims, he not only felt his own chance of uniting his fate with hers diminish—but as he hailed her by her new titles, and placed the hand he had covered with kisses upon his palpitating heart, he declared, that, although, in the glory of her rising, he saw his own hopes set for ever—yet "would he not exchange the feelings of the moment for all that the world, independent of herself, could bestow upon him." She smiled her confidence, that she should yet be able to conquer his scruples—and when, a few hours afterwards, the impatient Earl

followed Percy, and again embraced her as his niece and heiress, he, in the fulness of his feelings, poured out the purpose he had nearest at heart.

We must have very faintly delineated the character of his Lordship, if the reader be not prepared to find him determined to carry any measure he had once seriously determined upon—and as his present hobby may be said to have combined and concentrated every object in which he could possibly have an interest in this life, he will not be supposed to have listened with any measured philosophy to the high-flown opinions, and delicate objections urged by Percy against his *own* claims. Several very active scenes are said to have passed between them, in which it appeared that the Earl of Harweden had no intention of shedding the habits of old Rycott of Wolston Worthy—in adopting the more splendid coat of his ancestorial bearings, and Michael Schwartz found his position in his Lordship's family at this time less of a sinecure even, than in the Squire's retirement in Cumberland.

To let our readers, however, into a secret which

the Earl himself would have dismissed his whole establishment had it been whispered among them—there was certainly a bitter drop at the bottom of the cup which he was thus anxious to quaff, as the *elixir vitæ*.

There was deep-rooted in his nature—or, if you will have it so, in his early education—such a feeling of family pride—such an ample sense of the dignity and importance which attached to a long line of ancestry, that, at every turn, and in the most zealous moments of his present pursuit, a sort of sudden pang at the heart—and a flush on the cheek, which he would not, and dared not to analyze, would check and interrupt him in the mid career of his speculations.

His own rash marriage had only tended to confirm him—justly, or not, is another question—in the opinion, that a difference in the rank and birth of persons united for life, was a perfect bar to matrimonial happiness.

When turning on his restless pillow—as he would occasionally bestow a passing anathema upon Schwartz for having abridged the contents of his "sedative draught," he would acknowledge to

himself, that he might have slept without it altogether, if, by the sacrifice of half his fortune, Percy could be made the son even of a gentleman! His dreams sometimes took the same turn, and he would swear he had been afflicted with an *incubus*, and all owing to the unskilful management of Michael Schwartz—who had, however, only to make his appearance to make his *peace*.

Now—I speak to those only who have been at the pains of studying something of human nature—the more his Lordship was haunted and worried by the intrusion of these drawbacks to his favourite scheme, the more urgent, and the more violent was he, in resisting all opposition to it—and one evening he nearly ruptured a blood-vessel *in earnest*, because Percy, in prosecuting his arguments in favour of self-denial to its utmost verge, declared to him, that, "situated as he was—a poor low-born being—connected only with infamy, and sprung from a dunghill, it would be degrading even to *him* to avail himself of the generosity of a patron, who had been beguiled even into the reception of him under his protection!"

Nothing, in short, tended more to keep Lord Harweden steady and immoveable in his purpose, than the opposition which he had to encounter in Percy—and it may certainly be questioned, whether, if the latter had—as might very naturally have been the case—fallen in at once with the views of his Lordship, the contest in his own mind might not have ended in the victory of his family prejudices, over the warmer feelings of his heart.

Whilst these domestic affairs were going forward, however, and when Percy even—not possessing superhuman powers of resistance—was, perhaps, bending under the excess of friendly tyranny, or rather, perhaps, under the more irresistible temptations of love, other matters, of a less agreeable nature, obtruded themselves, and served at least for a time to vary the monotony of discussing this one interminable theme. The Earl of Harweden owed it to himself, no less than to his family and the public, to bring to public justice Jarvis and Driblet, the men who were in confinement under the charge, if not of the ac-

tual murder of the ill-starred, as misnamed Lord Brandon, at least, of being accessaries to it.

The Old Bailey Session was at hand, and Percy was indefatigable—for the purpose of saving his patron as much as possible from so unpleasant a task, in procuring the necessary evidence, and consulting with Mr Spencer upon the proper mode of proceeding. Blencow was a principal witness against them; but the lawyers very much doubted, if it would be sufficient to bring the charge home to the culprits, although so much came out against them in the course of the proceedings, as evinced the share they had in leading the unfortunate young man into the snares which had proved fatal to him.

In order, therefore, that the ends of justice might not be completely baffled, and with the secret conviction on his own mind, that the Dossiters would be found more deeply implicated in the transactions of these men, than as yet was made to appear, Percy was easily induced to proceed against them, for stealing his portfolio and watch, which the zeal and exertions of Blencow had enabled him to bring home to one of them—Jarvis—

and which, there was little doubt, would be found also to implicate Driblet.

We need not trouble our readers with details, which can be little interesting to those who are not engaged in the agreeable task of arraigning culprits, or prosecuting felons. It is sufficient for our purpose to state, that the evidence failing on the trial for the murder, as had been anticipated, the prisoners were again placed at the bar, on the charge of stealing a portfolio belonging to Percy Mallory, Esq. from the person of Piers Blencow—the said portfolio containing bills to a considerable amount, together with a valuable gold repeating watch, &c. &c. The property—at least part of it, as the reader will recollect—was found in the possession of the two prisoners, by Blencow; and a sub-agent whom he had encountered in his inquiries, and who trembled for his share in the various transactions, in which he had been employed by his principals, was easily induced to give information against them, when he found they were already in the hands of justice.—This man was now produced, when Percy perceiving that he prevaricated—and after exchanging looks with the pri-

soners, even to deny statements that he had previously made, ventured to make some observation from the bench, on which he was seated, near the Judge, but being checked by the Court, he sat down somewhat ruffled—and the more indignant at not being able to express what he felt.—He, however, left his seat, and made his way towards the table, where Mr Spencer was sitting, and urged him to probe the witness home, upon certain points, which he had evidently laboured to evade.—The man faltered under the examination, but in the result, fully proved the guilt of one of the prisoners—this was the man Jarvis—and Percy, when called upon to identify his property, the watch and the portfolio, which had been subsequently recovered from the watchman, who had detained it—did so in a tone of decision, and even acrimony, which to an indifferent observer would have conveyed the idea, that there was a degree of vindictiveness in it not altogether creditable to the humanity of the witness—nor sufficiently justified by an act from which he had suffered so little inconvenience. But Percy, from certain points of evidence in which one of the witnesses had been

checked as not being strictly in form, clearly traced the connection with the Dossiters, in which it appeared that he had been marked out as their dupe from the beginning—and to this must be attributed a disposition to severity, which certainly formed no part of his natural character.

He had just uttered the words—"To the portfolio as well as the watch I could swear, even if I had discovered them in the wilds of America!"

"Beware!" cried the prisoner Jarvis, fixing his eye, with a strongly marked expression, upon Percy.

Mr Spencer interposed—"The prisoner must not be allowed to intimidate a witness."

Percy smiled at the interference, and was proceeding in his evidence, when, a second time, the prisoner Jarvis warned him to "Beware!"

Percy felt indignant, and appealed to the Court whether it was to be tolerated, that the prisoner should impede the course of evidence.—The Judge commanded the silence of the prisoner, observing, that he would have an opportunity of put-

ting any questions to the witness, when the evidence was gone through.

"That may be too late, my Lord," observed the prisoner, doggedly.

"I am ready to answer any he may be disposed to put to me," cried Percy contemptuously.

The prisoner, without waiting for the sanction of the Court, instantly availed himself of Percy's offer.

"Are you ready to swear to the property?" demanded he.

"Before God and my country."

"You may repent ——"

"My Lord," began Mr Spencer, rising hastily.

"Prisoner!" observed the Judge, "I repeat to you, that every advantage will be afforded that you can promise yourself from examining the witness—but the Court can admit of nothing that may appear to bias or influence the evidence as it is delivered before the jury."

"Then the consequences be upon his own head," was the observation of the prisoner.

"I am content it should be so—my Lord—I swear to the property as mine."

"And as surely," exclaimed the prisoner, "you have sworn away the life of your OWN FATHER!"

"By Jove! it is a lie!" exclaimed Lord Harweden—but the reprimand he was about to receive from the Bench for the indecorum, was arrested by the general tumult which prevailed through the Court.

The words of the prisoner had scarcely stricken upon the ear of Percy before they were lost, with the sense of all that was passing around him. He fell forward from the situation in which he had been standing behind Mr Spencer, and would have been precipitated upon the table, round which the counsel sat, had not that gentleman, who was turning towards him at the moment, caught him in his arms, and carried him out of Court. The situation of Lord Harweden, who was on the Bench, was scarcely less pitiable, but he contrived to leave the Court unaided, and to find his way to Percy in an adjoining room, where he had been carried by his friend Spencer.

The trial, in the meanwhile, had been suspended, and the peculiarity of the circumstances, which

had interrupted the proceedings, induced the Court to await the return of Mr Spencer, to enable him to consult with the prosecutor, or his friends.

Percy was incapable, even after he had recovered the first shock, either to suggest any measures, or to benefit even by the advice of Lord Harweden or Mr Spencer. He was placed, therefore, under care of his Lordship's servant to convey him home in the carriage, having first solemnly enjoined his friends to probe the truth of the man's averment, and to use every possible means of saving him from the consequences of his guilt.

The Earl felt only indignation and resentment against the prisoner. It was clear, as Percy had previously affirmed, that this man had been, and probably was, a mere tool in the hands of the Dossiters, and that the present avowal might be made only in the hopes of averting the penalty of the law about to fall upon his head.

At all events, his regard and friendship, even for Percy, were not powerful enough to induce any interference on his part in the present stage of the business—and, indeed, the evil was to a certain

point irremediable, since the exposure had been so public.—When Mr Spencer confirmed him in his opinion that there was no possible mode of staying the proceedings in the present stage of the business—that the law must have its course—but that there need be no apprehension respecting the life of the man,—they returned together into the Court; and, after a few words between the Judge and Counsel, the prisoner having no witnesses to produce, the Judge proceeded to sum up, and the Jury, finding the case too clear to admit of a doubt, returned a verdict of Guilty against Jarvis, but with evident reluctance, as was further proved by a recommendation to mercy, in consequence of the relative connection, which had been discovered, in the course of the trial, between the prosecutor and the prisoner.

The verdict was recorded—but the Judge only shook his head when the Foreman explained the grounds of this recommendation of the Jury.

There was some delay in bringing on the next cause, during which the Judge had retired—and before the Court was resumed, Mr Spencer, aided by the concurring opinion of some of his learn-

ed friends, had made up his mind to a mode of proceeding, which, being sanctioned by Lord Harweden, he brought forward—and addressed to the approval of the Bench. He stated, that, by the Common Law, a man, who had been convicted of one felony, might be prosecuted for another, in order to bring accessaries to punishment—that although his client, as might easily be inferred from what had recently passed before the Court, was not likely to be influenced by a spirit of persecution, there certainly was a mystery connected with his birth—and an exchange of children had been fraudulently made, affecting property to a considerable amount—and the interests of a family of the highest rank in the country. It was, therefore, desirable that the parties inculpated in the transgression should be brought forward, and the fact ascertained, if possible, whether what they heard from the prisoner was capable of proof—and if so, how far he had been privy to the abduction of Lord Harweden's son—who had, as he should be able fully to prove, been surreptitiously exchanged in infancy for the person who had

unhappily appeared as prosecutor in the late trial.

After some discussion on the point of form, the Bench interposed no objection to the mode of proceeding, and Lord Harweden left the Court with his counsel—enabled at length to give free vent to his feelings, which had undergone, and were still undergoing, a very cutting and severe trial.

He proceeded to his house, in the conviction that he should find Percy—although he almost dreaded to meet him after the terrible explanation which had taken place. At one moment he repeated the exclamation which had escaped him in Court, and felt assured that it was a trick of the prisoner to excite sympathy—that he had discovered the history of Percy probably from his connection with Dossiter, and had resorted to the manœuvre on the spur of the occasion. The Earl would then seize his hat, and declare his intention of proceeding to Percy's chambers in order to comfort and console him—a doubt would as suddenly flash upon his mind of the probability of his speculation—and he would then throw himself into his chair, and, after giving fresh vent to his irritated feelings,

wonder upon the fresh difficulty which so public a declaration of Percy's degrading connections would throw in the way of his favourite schemes!

"What the devil had he—or I, to do with prosecutions?—curse the watch and the portfolio—By Jove! it is all the work of the devil, or Dossiter himself. I'm deadly ill"—and when Mr Spencer left him to commence proceedings, the old gentleman was gradually drilled into a calm, under the personal command of Michael Schwartz, at the head of a regiment of bottles and boxes, duly marshalled on the library-table.

Loo was soon informed of the event which had caused this scene of confusion—and deeply lamented it, from her knowledge of the sensitive feelings of poor Percy—and of the difficulties which she was aware it would place in the way of securing their mutual happiness.

There was a promptitude as well as vigour in the mind of this high-minded girl, which always pointed to the readiest means of applying the remedy to an evil—or of preventing consequences which she could almost intuitively perceive in the result of any particular action or mode of proceed-

ing. We have already seen that she was above the trifling etiquettes of life, when no offence against moral feeling, or the higher duties were involved.

She now determined to see Percy—since he persevered in absenting himself from his friends. Ordering the carriage, therefore, she declined the offer of Lady Sarah to accompany her—observing, "That her Ladyship might conclude her to be an odd being—but that she had long been used to think and act for herself, and must do so in the most important crisis of her fate"—and drove off alone to Percy's chambers in the Temple.

She ascended the stairs with her servant, who knocked several times at the door without receiving any answer. At length, after one of those impatient summonses, which, on other occasions, only announce the arrival of some great personage, the door was thrown violently open by Percy himself, who, with anger, or rather the expression of a maniac, demanded "What the fellow wanted?"—before he perceived the retiring figure of the lady, who was seriously alarmed at his slovenly and disordered appearance. His arms and

his countenance fell as he discovered her. There was no longer an expression of rage or impetuosity on his countenance, but it was succeeded by a look, so woe-begone—so indescribably miserable, that Loo Clarendon could only beckon to the servant to leave them, and offer her supporting arm to lead her friend back into the room.

When she had taken a chair, and he had thrown himself, or rather fallen upon the sofa, she no longer suffered herself to be subdued by the feelings of the moment, but collecting herself for the twofold office of rallying her own spirits, and recalling his, she addressed him with as much calmness as could be expected under the circumstances, and with all the tenderness which she thought due to one who loved so truly, and had suffered so much for her sake.

"Be calm, my best friend," she began—"consider what those who are interested in you must suffer from this unreasonable despondency, with which you have suffered yourself to be overwhelmed. Reflect upon the blessings still within reach of your hopes, and do not reject the gifts

of Providence, because you are not at liberty to separate the evil from the good."

"Is it Loo Bellenden?" cried Percy, raising his head—"Is it the companion of my happiest—my only happy hours?—Is it she who, blest with every advantage that Heaven can bestow—rich in all that makes the sum of human riches, and suffering only the shadow of the bitter ills which now weigh me to the earth—is it she who rejected wealth, station, and the truest heart that ever beat for love of woman, because a suspicion hung about her birth—and does she now bid me look up from the very depths of infamy and degradation, to dwell on a prospect which angels might envy—and none beneath them be worthy to enjoy?"

"Come, come, Percy—this is a theme I have often forbidden in happier days, although from a very different motive—but we have nothing to do—and little in common with angels—so as I descend from the clouds—do you rise from your imaginary depression, and we shall not only find ourselves much nearer upon an equality—but in-

finitely more capable of seeing our way before us."

"Never—never, dearest Loo—I am for ever dishonored—and the taint of my degradation must never reach you."

"In this, Percy, you are at liberty to act for yourself—I speak neither of taint, nor dishonor, when I would urge with you the inducements to return the kindness and sympathy of friends, from whom you appear resolved to banish yourself."

"Who told you so?" cried Percy, starting from the sofa.

"The fact speaks for itself. For three days, my uncle has entreated your presence. His entreaties and mine have been equally unavailing, and yet you must be conscious of the pain you inflict upon us."

"Forget me—banish me from your thoughts—I am not fit for society—I feel the soil and filth of sordid villainy adhere to me—I carry contamination in my very breath—it is inherent—it sticks—it cannot be washed away—and what then have I to do with friendship—with—with—

Oh! thought of distraction! with Loo—Loo Clarendon!" and again he fell, nerveless, upon the sofa.

Again she sought, by every incentive, to rouse him from this effeminate torpor of mind. She used none of the common-places of consolation, but admitting the aggravation of his misery by the new discovery, she endeavoured to throw some lights upon its darkest passages, by a supposition that it might still be a fabrication; and when she had, to a certain degree, entrapped his attention, by thus leading him into a labyrinth of hope, she reverted to the result even of his worst suspicions, and laboured to shew, that they were merely chimeras which a few years would dissipate, and which a life of privacy and virtue would dispel altogether.

"You know me, Percy—or ought to know me—and having pledged my faith to you, it is you only can absolve me from it—not by rejection—not by any false notions of delicacy—Nay, nay, listen to me—it is only by forfeiting the honor on which I reposed—repelling the virtues which you have hitherto cherished—tarnishing the cha-

racter I have been taught to revere—it is through these only that you can acquit me of the faith I have solemnly pledged to my deliverer in the hills of Cumberland, and the man who claimed it as my first debt of gratitude. You may, I repeat, spurn—reject me, Percy—but you must yourself be changed in all things, before my truth can be shaken"

"Is this not an aggravation—a tenfold aggravation of my sufferings?—is it not to embitter ——"

"Nothing I intend to say shall embitter a moment of your life, Percy.—I am the more deeply bound to you, by what you consider your misfortunes, and did you fairly judge of me by yourself, you would give me credit for appreciating you, not according to the goods you may possess in this life, but by the virtues which alone can enable you to lay up a store for a better."

"Leave me—leave me, Loo—in pity—for mercy's sake—I shall forget myself—my—my resolutions."

"Not only forget, but abandon them—For shame—will you suffer a poor weak girl to out-

man you in firmness—and strength of purpose? Hear me, Percy—I am above all the coquetry of my sex—not because I am better than others, but, probably, because I have never had occasion to resort to it."

"You!—you——"

"Nay—nay, Percy—I claim none of the fine things you are about to appropriate to me," interrupted she, smiling; "but I am what you see me, and if I have sometimes compromised the dignity of my sex, as defined by the laws of society, I have only conceded it to something more valuable, and consistent with my duty. I have been sincere—and, therefore, saved both you and myself many a heart-ache, which the want of it would have entailed upon us. I have found the benefit of frankness—and I will not abandon it, in a crisis when everything is at stake. I see that—what shall I term it?—not obstinacy, but your pertinacity of opinion, is inaccessible to argument."

"You—you may command me, Loo, in all things, except ——"

"The only instance in which I would be arbi-

trary—But attend to me—you have taken a view of your situation, which neither my wishes nor my sympathy can alter."

"For mercy's sake, do not reproach me, Loo!"

"Neither in word—nor in my heart, Percy—but I must have the benefit of the fact—you cannot face the world—you must therefore turn your back upon it.—All I ask—all I claim, is to be your companion and your friend—my uncle loves you as his son—he is anxious to strengthen the tie, by an alliance with his new-found niece."

"Be not too sure of that, Loo—he is proud—justly proud of his high descent—and I have not seen him—he has been content to bandy messages with me—he has not, as he was wont, sought me out—since the fatal disclosure of Thursday—he was before staggered by the obscurity—be assured he is now shocked, and disgusted by the infamy of my family!"

"Be it so, Percy—still his word is pledged, and his affections unchanged. He might—with his worldly notions—be averse to the publicity of an union, thus formed by his niece and heiress—but he will not refuse to bestow upon us his

own abandoned cottage on the hills; and there, in seclusion, if we do not find our own happiness, we must have forgotten what first constituted it —or have drawn strange inferences from the little we have seen of what is called the world."

"Loo—Loo—tempt me not with such a prospect—point not out the cool spring, to the exhausted victim of the desart—hold not up the fruits of paradise to the eyes of a famishing wretch, who has not strength to reach them. I cannot listen—I dare not—fascination is in your voice —heaven in your accent—and the more they breathe their balmy influence upon my distracted soul—the more surely they speak of happiness— which never—never can be mine, without sinking me to the depths of infamy, even lower than my cruel fate has plunged me.—Forgive—forgive, blest being—think of my struggles—call me not weak —deem me not feeble or infirm, when I have the resolution to bid adieu to thee—and to happiness —for ever."—And before she was aware of the action, he had snatched up his hat—and flown rather than precipitated himself out of the room and down the stairs.

She had struggled with her own feelings, in order to inspire him with resolution, but thus left and abandoned—the powers of woman could go no further—she—yes, reader—she burst into tears, and, overcome by the variety of sensations by which she had been assailed, wept as heartily as ever did any of those ladies—who—if their history is to be credited—spend their days in a cloud of white kerchiefs—and their nights in moistening their pillows with tears.

"What became of her?" asks the sentimental reader. She returned home, to be sure—not so Percy.—Inquiries were daily made after him for a week subsequent to this meeting, and the only intelligence which could be gleaned from the neighbours was, that his friend Blencow had been observed to enter the chambers in the dusk of the same evening, and to carry off certain packages in a hackney-coach.—An additional piece of information was indeed collected in the course of another week, namely, that the porter of the Inner Temple had received the key of his chambers, with directions to keep it, until Mr Percy Mallory should authorize some person to demand

it, and that, if not demanded before the expiration of six months, it was to be conveyed to the landlord of the chambers, who had notice of his intention to surrender possession at the end of that period.

We are perfectly aware, that, at this place, our history will be put aside—either in the slovenly way of some people, who turn a book open, with its leaves upon the table—or by those scarcely more tidy ones who boldly turn down the leaf—and that with an ominous "cluck," the reader will be called upon for an opinion upon the conduct of a lover who could thus leave a fair mistress to pine in ignorance of his fate—and in so ungallant a procedure, take upon him to decide for himself in direct opposition to the wishes and commands of his liege lady. Such over-rigid judges should wait until they have the whole evidence before them. It does not suit us, however, to enter at this time upon his defence. If there be no kind considerate maiden aunt—no father of a family whose daughter has lately had a narrow escape of running away with a strolling player—ready at hand to bestow an eulogium upon

Percy's admirable example of self-denial, he must be subjected to a jury, not of his peers, because it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find so many within any reasonable allotted space—but of young ladies under the age of twenty-one—and we may add—Heaven grant him a safe deliverance.

How Lord Harweden alternated in his ravings between the opposite feelings of dread, at a contamination of his family genealogy—and the wilful retreat of the only being who had ever effectually conciliated his affections—and how Lady Loo comforted herself after the first burst of grief, and disappointment at the open rebellion of her lover, it is not in our power, at this moment, to say—and we leave our readers to settle the matter, which they may easily do from the foregoing premises, in the manner most congenial with their own taste and imagination respecting such things. We only beg leave to premise—for fear of accidents which might interfere with the leading truths, and the very authenticity of our history—that the lady did not die of the disease called Love—and that the old gentleman found time,

and even inclination, to proceed against the culprit Jarvis, under the advice and counsel of Mr Spencer.

CHAPTER XIII.

At length the second trial came to be heard, and Lord Harweden, prepared for the worst that could now happen, again took his seat near the Judge upon the Bench. The prisoner had summoned as witnesses the Messrs Dossiter, father and son, and one Mabel Green, a laundress, who could not be found according to the address given by him. He had, in the first instance, expressed a strong anxiety for her discovery, but learning that she had left her former lodgings, and was gone, no one knew whither, he expressed no wish to postpone the trial on account of her absence. The Dossiters had been served with *subpœnas*, but some days before the trial, it appeared that they had silently decamped—and it having been ascertained that they had previously made several

large remittances to the Continent of America, it was presumed that they had followed in the same direction, without acknowledging the necessity of taking any formal leave of their friends at home.

Mr Spencer, as leading counsel for the prosecution, had been fully instructed in the details of the story of the stolen child by Lord Harweden, and the evidence given at Carlisle supplied him with every thing necessary to trace the agent in the business to Giles Mallory, if—as he affirmed —this Jarvis was the same individual person. Alice Halpin, who was now liberated from her durance at Carlisle, was brought up from the north, to substantiate the evidence she had formerly given.

During the early part of the day, the Court was occupied with the recapitulation of facts, with which the reader by this time is fully acquainted. The prisoner, far from attempting to evade the charges brought against him, seemed to feel that his only hope of escape depended upon the natural feelings of Percy as his son—who, from his connections and character, he doubted not would

be able powerfully to interpose between him and any disgraceful or degrading punishment. He threw himself upon the mercy of the Court, and trusted that the absence of such material witnesses as the Dossiters, whose dupe and instrument he professed himself to have been made through life, would entitle him to the indulgent consideration of the Jury—that he was a man more sinned against than sinning—that he had long repented of his share in the transaction, and should years ago have claimed his son, but for the threats and artifices employed by Clement Dossiter, who held the terror of the law over his head on one hand, and his own private vengeance, which he had ample power of inflicting, on account of his dependant situation, on the other. Another most important witness, he added, who could expressly prove his having been employed by Dossiter, was lost to him, from his ignorance of the woman's abode,—and when reminded by Lord Harweden's counsel, that he had been at liberty to postpone the trial to the next sessions, if he considered her testimony essential to his cause, he observed, that he had already suffered so much from the share

he had had in the affair, and from the loss of a child, for whom he had never ceased to feel the deepest interest, and had never, indeed, lost sight of, that he would rather suffer under any verdict a Jury of his countrymen might return, in their view of his whole case as it now stood before them, than any longer labour under the odium which he had incurred to his own injury, for the exclusive benefit and advantage of others.

There was something about the man, apparently above his station—and unquestionably there were circumstances, which, if taken with a degree of latitude, were calculated to awaken some sympathy in the misfortunes, however criminally induced, of a person who stood in the situation of the prisoner—and this was evident in the general feeling of the Court and the spectators.

Just in this critical moment, when Mr Spencer was about to make some observations upon what had just been stated by the prisoner, it was announced by the Clerk of the Arraigns, that Mabel Green, the witness in question, was now in Court. Being produced in the witness box, Lord Harweden's counsel congratulated the pri-

soner upon the timely arrival of his witness. The tone and manner of the observation attracting all eyes towards the dock, no small degree of curiosity was awakened by the expression of the prisoner's countenance, which was suddenly changed from the air of confident appeal which had so lately characterized it—into one not only of surprise, but alarm. The effect was transient—and his heightened colour quickly dispelled the cadaverous hue which had spread over it only for a moment. The woman having been sworn, answered without hesitation the several necessary questions touching her name, occupation, place of residence, &c. She was asked if she knew the prisoner—upon which, turning towards him for the first time, and having surveyed him, with an air of some surprise, she answered in the affirmative. Jarvis was then permitted to put his questions to her, the answers to which tended fully to justify his claim to the name of Mallory, by which she had known him for nearly twenty years.

"This is all, my Lord," said the prisoner, addressing the bench, "that I have to ask of the

witness. She has proved what is necessary to confirm my statement."

"Let the witness stay where she is," cried Mr Spencer; "I have some questions to ask, with his Lordship's permission, which may perhaps make the case even clearer.—Pray, Mistress Mabel—Green, I think, is your name?"

"Yes, your Worship, that is sin' I were married to ——"

"No matter when or to whom you were married,—we don't want your history."

"No—your Worship."

"Be silent, woman—and only answer directly to the questions I shall put to you—You say you have known the prisoner for twenty years?"

"Aye, I'll warrant ye—your Worship—full twenty, if not more."

"Worship me no Worship—answer me plain, yes or no."

"Yes, your Honor—or no, if your Worship's Honor likes it better."

"Pshaw!—since you have known him for twenty years, I beg you will tell his Lordship and these gentlemen *what* you know of him."

"No great good, your Honor—he paid me a 'nuity of ten pounds, according to a binding oath, for some years, till he was dead."

"Dead! why, thou foolish woman—have you not just sworn to him living, and standing there before you?"

"Yes, your Worship—but I didn't know that till such time as I came here—and it was all along of seeing his name in this here bit of a summons, as was sent me from my ould lodgings in Broad Court, to Finchley, as I come at all, for thinks I to myself ——"

"Well, well—we have nothing to do with your thoughts—you came here because you saw his name?"

"I thought him as dead as a door nail, your Worship."

"But you see he is alive, and have sworn to the fact?"

"I'm sure he gave out as he was dead, to rob me of my 'nuity."

"Well—you must settle that question hereafter; at present you will have no objection to in-

form the Court, for what service or consideration you received or claim that annuity?"

"It was for keeping my secret," interrupted the prisoner—whose countenance could not conceal the violent internal agitation of his mind.

"Prisoner, you must not put words into the mouth of the witness—you will be again at liberty to ask her any questions by and by, if you think it necessary to impeach the testimony of your own witness."

The question was again put—and the woman returned the answer suggested by the prisoner.

"It were to keep his secret, to be sure."

"It must have been a valuable secret to be worth so much, my good woman—but as there are no secrets in this Court—and as the prisoner has thought proper to bring you here for the purpose of letting out his secret, you will not object to stating what it was?"

"Lah!—if your Worship knows the rights of it from he, you maun know naturally it were all about them childer."

"What had you to do with these childer, as you call them?"

"Why, warn't I hired to take care on 'em, your Honor?"

"Oh, no doubt!—but you may as well inform the Court, because they do not know all about it, what two children you are speaking of?"

"Why, Mallory's, to be sure, and the one as come from foreign parts."

"That is the stolen one?"

"Aye, sure, your Honor—I had no hand or part in it, so I don't care who knows it."

"Of course not—but how do you know it was stolen?"

Some objection being made by the Court to the question, the woman, without hesitation, took upon to answer.

"I was told so by Judy Mallory—as true a woman as ever broke bread."

"And you were to keep this secret on receiving an annuity of ten pounds from the prisoner."

"Sure, you're all out there!"—But here the prisoner, as if in apprehension of the woman's proceeding farther than was necessary, exclaimed, "Yes, witness, you know it was for keeping the secret."

"I did'nt say it warn't."

"Silence, prisoner—attend to me," continued Mr Spencer; "Did Mallory himself or his wife acquaint you with the secret?"

"Judy did."

"And she promised you the annuity for keeping it?"

"Not she, I'll be sworn," cried Alice Halpin, who had been an attentive observer of what was passing, and who heeded not the repeated commands of silence—"She'd neither the means nor the will—She suffered along with me, and had no secret to keep—or money to pay for keeping it, if she had."

"To me, my Lord," cried the prisoner, with increasing confidence, "it was an important secret—she might have betrayed me at any time."

"I admonish you again, prisoner, to be silent," said Mr Spencer; "it will be better for yourself—your anxiety to conceal the details of a secret which you have yourself avowed in open Court, is not likely to be of any service to your cause." Then turning to the witness, he asked

her again, "Whether the wife, Judy Mallory, or the prisoner, offered her the bribe?"

"Why, lah! your Worship—*he*, to be sure—Judy warn't to know a word about it."

"I only told her so, my Lord, at the time," again interrupted the prisoner.

"Why, Giles, you know it was"—the woman was proceeding—but the counsel interposed.

"Witness, you are not to attend to the prisoner, but to answer to the Court—and you will recollect you are upon your oath—and must therefore answer."

"Lord bless thee! I'll answer to the devil himself—I'm no afeared of him nor your Worship."—*(A laugh.)*

"Attend, then, to my question—turn your eyes from the prisoner, and look steadily in my face."

"There, your Worship."

"You say the prisoner it was, who offered you the bribe?"

"I don't know what you calls him—it was Giles Mallory, there."

"He offered you the bribe?"

"Him called it a 'nuity."

"Psha!—whatever it was, he offered it to you—and I again ask you, as you shall answer to Heaven, why he offered you this comfortable annuity?"

"I shan't answer to Heaven nothing at all about it—it's as plain as a pike-staff; he gave it me to say nothing about the childer."

"So far so good—Keep your eyes this way—at what time of the day was it that he made you this offer?"

"It warn't no time of the day, your Worship—it were all along of a pitch dark night, as the thing happened."

"Very well—was the wife—this Judy Mallory, present when he offered it?"

"Why, what a memory thee hast—I ha told your Worship over and over again, she warn't to know it—and it's likely he would go and offer a 'nuity before her eyes."

"Silence the prisoner," cried the counsel, seeing him again about to interrupt the proceedings.—"Why was the wife not to know any thing about the matter?"

"Why, that, I tell ye, were the whole secret."

"Keep your eyes from the prisoner."

"Lah, your Worship! I'm sure I don't want to see nothing of him—he do look, for all the world, as he did when he threatened to be the death on me, if I ever uttered a word about it."

"About what?"

"About!—there again—why, what about, but the secret to be sure?"

"That is, of stealing the child from Cumberland?"

"Not a bit of it—that were done and gone—it were his taking it away, your Honor!"

"Now, then, we are in train.—Keep the prisoner quiet.—The wife, Judy, then, was not present when he took the child away?"

"I warrant she were though," replied the witness.

"You equivocate, woman."

"I'll do any thing your Worship likes, if you will but ha done teazing one cross like."

"You say the prisoner offered you the bribe on the night on which he took the child away?"

"Yes, your Honor, as sure as I stand here, and for the matter of that ——"

"Cease your babbling—answer me directly to the question."

"I answers directly—as fast as I can, your Honor."

The Court, as it infallibly does upon such occasions, indulged in a laugh, at the expence of the lawyer—but he was not to be laughed, or talked out of his purpose.

"You have sworn, that he offered you this money, or annuity, on the night on which he took the child away.—You have also sworn, that he did so offer the money in the absence of his wife —and you now swear that the wife was present?"

"And I swear again, she were present when he tooked the child away."

"Then how could he tamper with you without her knowledge?"

"That were after."

"After!—after he was gone?"

"But he comed back again, your Worship."

"Without the child?"

"Lord love your Worship—no—with it, dead as a herring, as I thought me."

"Silence the prisoner," absolutely shouted Mr Spencer, seeing him again about to interrupt the evidence. The woman, turning her eyes towards the dock, in spite of the frequent prohibitions she had incurred—

"What harm, now Giles," asked she, "thee be'st laid by the heels, and it can't signify telling these here gentlefolks in the wigs, what they all seems to know aforehand."

The prisoner, with difficulty, was restrained by the officers near him—so desperate seemed his determination of checking the volubility of the witness. The counsel resumed his vocation.

"He returned, then, with the child dead?"

"No, your Honor—I heard afterwards as it lived and did well; though, for my part, I took un for a bloody corpse, rather nor a living child."

"And you were paid to conceal your knowledge of its murder?"

"Lah! defend me, your Worship—no such a thing.—I were only to leave the house, without

saying nothing to Judy, and to meet her next night at the Nine Bells in the Borough."

"And get your first ten pounds as an earnest?"

"Yes, your Worship."

"Merely for leaving the house?"

"That's just the upshot of it—and now your Worship knows as much on it as I do!"

"Not quite—there was another condition besides leaving the house?"

"Yes—I warn't to say nothing about it to his wife."

"About what?"

"Lah!—why, about his tumbling the poor thing down in the kennel, and near killing it, as I told your Honor."

"Oh!—he dashed the child's head against a stone?"

"That's all—only he never meant it, I maun say that for him."

"But still he didn't wish his wife to know it?"

"Sure he didn't—the poor soul would have pined after it—for she were a good mother, what-

ever else she mought be—Lad, Giles—what be'st making such wry faces at one for?"

Again the woman was directed to attend to the counsel—and again the counsel continued his examination.

"When the prisoner retired from his house then—after having deposited the wounded child, you left it with him?"

"No, your Honor—he stole down first—and left me to—to put out the light."

"And then, ——" said the lawyer smiling.

"Yes, your Worship—and then I went out too."

"That's the whole truth, my Lord," cried the prisoner, whose pallid visage seemed again to have summoned back some portion of its natural hue.—Mr Spencer proceeded.

"Still you appear, my good lady, as I said before, to have earned your annuity at a very cheap rate—by just putting out a candle—and, as you call it—taking yourself off!"

"And to keep the secret, your Worship."

"That was something for a woman,"—and a turn, was raised against the sex, which

the one most interested did not appear to understand—as she joined heartily in the mirth of the Court, which seemed much better suited to her temperament, than the graver interrogatories of Mr Barrister Spencer.

"Now, Mabel Green—it appears that Judy Mallory was soon beyond the reach of your secret—and yet you continued with a safe conscience to receive the annuity—at least, as long as the conscience of the prisoner would allow him to pay it?"

"That I did, your Worship—till he swore he was dead."

"I wonder so sensible a woman as you appear to be, Mrs Mabel, took him at his word—but, pray—what did you—or could you conceive the annuity was continued for, after Judy Mallory was disposed of over the seas?"

"Why, how often must I tell your Worship—for keeping the secret, to be sure. I never knowed such a man for bothering a plain question."

"We shall see, Mabel, which is the ablest botherer of the two—but you havn't told his Lordship, or the gentlemen of the jury, from whom

you were to keep the secret after Judy was fairly out of the way ?"

" From every body, mun—he told me it would be the death on him if it were to come to be known."

" How could that be—if, as you say, you knew the child was still alive ?"

" I !—I couldn't say it were alive—I never heard on it aterwards."

" Woman, take care—you swore just now that you had heard that it lived, and was doing well."

" That were t'other child."

" The other child !"

" The child, as he brought back ——"

" The wounded child !"

" Of course."

" Of course,"—repeated the counsel, and turned a significant look towards the bench—" the wounded child was brought back—and the other was carried out of sight."

" I'm sure, your Worship—it were no business of mine; I don't know where it were carried."

" But I DO," exclaimed Lord Harweden from

the Bench—in a tone of extreme agitation, which was gently checked by the Judge.

"One moment, my Lord," said Spencer in a lower tone to the Earl—and he again applied himself to the task of interrogating the woman.

"Of course, you say—and, of course, I agree you did not know *where* he carried the child—but you saw him carry it away?"

"To be sure, I did—or what ——"

"Be quiet—and this was the secret?"

"The whole and tote of it, your Worship, and what harm ater all—it was his own, and he mought, I thought, do as he pleased wi' him."

"Admirably reasoned, Mabel,—so he brought back the stolen child, wounded—or unfit for service, and carried off his own, which, as you very properly say, he had a natural right to do."

"That's just, your Honor, what I meant to say, and should have told you at once without all this bother."

"I am sorry, Mistress Mabel, to have bothered you—but there is still one question to be answered before we part—How did you know that the wounded child—now that we are able to dis-

tinguish the one from the other—still lived, and was doing well?"

"For the best reason in the world, your Worship, because I seed it, in this here very room, restored to its own flesh and blood."

"You were at the trial?"

"I was sent by Giles, there, your Worship, to see how things went ——"

"And you saw the child restored to its own friends?"

"To be sure I did, and thought no harm done, since all had their own."

Here the Court was thrown into the utmost confusion, in consequence of the effect produced by the evidence upon Lord Harweden—and upon the prisoner at the bar.—Both had fallen into something which had the appearance of a fit—and every body having some remedy at hand, or to propose, much bustle was created, and little advantage, as usual, derived from it.

We necessarily accompanied his Lordship, who was carried into an adjoining room, where, perhaps, for the first time in his life, Michael Schwartz, who had been especially ordered on

duty in case of accidents—had it in his power to be of real service in his official department, and by throwing in the contents of his domestic laboratory, to restore his master to a sense of the happiness that awaited him. The sensations which accompanied the resuscitation of the prisoner must have been of a very different nature—and the result of the trial, and its consequences, may be readily anticipated by the reader, without any necessity, on our part, of descending to painful and offensive details.

The facts of the case came out in detail, and may be summed up in a very few words. Mallory having pledged himself to obtain the child of Mr Levison Rycott—or Clarendon—and the reward to be received from Mr Clement Dossiter, being calculated by the difficulties opposed to the abduction of a child from a family of respectability, and at such a distance from the scene of action, would suffer no obstacle, when he had so nearly achieved his purpose, to interfere with its completion. When, therefore, on the night appointed for the delivery of the stolen child to Dossiter, or Maitland, as he then called himself

—the man Mallory took it from the arms of his wife, he left his dwelling by a back-door, fearful of being traced with his treasure—and with all the speed which fear suggests, even without a reasonable apprehension of pursuit, as he was whisking through a dark passage—one of the labyrinth, which the curious reader may trace under the various distinguishing titles of Glass-house or Fisher's Alleys, between the Temple and Bridge Street —his foot stumbled, and he fell with such violence that the child was precipitated forward, and its head brought in contact with the edge of a projecting step. He instantly recovered himself, and caught the infant up in his arms—but, by the glimmer of a distant lamp, assuring himself that the blow had been fatal, not a moment was to be lost in supplying a remedy. The hour of appointment had arrived, and not to produce the child was to lose the benefit of his hard-earned reward. The ready suggestion of substituting his own child was not likely to escape in such a predicament; but he was fully aware of the formidable opposition he should meet with from his wife, who would resist the exchange of her own

child, to whom she was devotedly attached. His intention, therefore, was to steal back to the chamber where he had left it asleep in the cradle —and, if possible, without betraying himself to his wife, to exchange it for the disfigured body of the one which he intended to leave in its stead.— As no suspicion—should he succeed to his wishes —could attach to him in the bosom even of Judy, he meant to leave her to account for the state in which she might find the infant, in any way most likely to suggest itself to her disordered imagination. His own feelings he found means to put asleep.

On his arrival at the back-door, through which he had issued on parting with his wife, he found all quiet within, and stealing up the stairs, gently lifted the latch of the door which opened into his bed-room, where the cribs of the two children also stood. He was at first startled by seeing a light within—but felt reassured, upon finding the woman only who had been employed as nurse for the few days the little stranger had been destined to remain under his charge. Without entering into any explanation of his intentions, he seized

this Mabel Green, and, placing his hands before her mouth, threatened her with instant destruction if she moved or made the least noise. He then entered upon the subsidy and treaty with her, which we have heard so amply discussed, and placing the child, whom he supposed dead, in the crib from which he snatched his own, he prepared to make the best of his way to Dossiter's chambers. He was stricken with apprehension at the scuffle, which reached his ears, as he passed the door of his own parlour—and the menacing tone in which he heard his wife addressed by the rough voices of her evidently unwelcome visitors, assured him that she was about to fall into the hands of justice. His measures, as we have before seen, were taken accordingly. His anxiety to have the child identified by Alice Halpin, who was the active agent in the business, will explain itself, and the mark which he put upon it was to answer the purpose, which, fatally for his peace of mind—at least for that portion of peace which remorse and a hardened course of life had left to be operated upon—succeeded even beyond his anticipations, and explained to a father,

in the moment of its discovery, that he had not only contributed to undermine and deprave the morals of his own child, but had actually been instrumental in bringing him to a premature and disgraceful death!

Alice Halpin could explain the remainder of the tale. Judith Mallory, when she escaped for a moment from the runners of justice, by turning a spring-lock upon them as she slipt through the parlour door—ran up stairs—and, in the dark, felt for her child where she knew, within a quarter of an hour previously, she had placed it—and catching the half-dead substitute in her arms, ran, or rather flew down stairs—and had reached the labyrinth of alleys already described, before the officers could interrupt her. The scent, however, soon lay—and a glimpse of her flying drapery called forth the view holloa, and led to all those consequences which are recorded in the beginning of our history—and which, having duly developed themselves, have brought us to the end of it.

The satisfaction of Lord Harweden, upon the whole story being laid open to him, was expressed with so little of moderation, and his feelings

were so little under control, that the attentions of his niece, who felt, perhaps, as much—"in moderation," Lady Grace would say—as himself, were in a great measure superseded by the attendance of Michael Schwartz. Whether the diagnostics of plethora, angina, paralysis, or apoplexy, were uppermost in the theory of this pharmacopolist—his practice was wisely applicable to all—and the worthy peer shed many a drop of the blood of the Plantagenets and Clarendons, and God knows whom else, in order to preserve the faculties necessary to appreciate the happiness which had so nearly overwhelmed him. Fortunately, the unaccountable absence of Percy, and the possibility of his having thrown himself into the Serpentine—or hanged himself in his garters, which was charitably suggested by his medico-domestic, to check an approximation to what he presumed to call, in an unguarded moment, stark-staring madness, kept his Lordship a little within bounds.

Lady Louisa could have rendered this expedient of the worthy disciple of Galen perfectly nugatory, had she not been bound in honor not to

reveal what Percy felt equally bound in honor to reveal to her—namely, the place of his retreat. He was awaiting her last letter at Harwich, preparatory to a self-imposed banishment to the Continent—where he trusted a conviction of his own honorable forbearance, and absence from the temptation to forego it, might, in time, so far recover his peace of mind, as to enter upon the prosecution of his studies, and provide independently for his future subsistence. "He would never return under the roof of his revered benefactor: he would never again trust himself in the presence of his lost Loo Clarendon!"

These were his last vows—but although they could require no answer, he waited for one, and lost not only the packet on board which he had taken his passage to Helvoet, but the wind also, which veered round, and blew right on shore for the next eight-and-forty hours! "How unlucky!" This was his ejaculation!

Such, good reader, is the nature of human vows—and such the inferences of man, who is not permitted to see an inch before his nose.

The post arrived—he expected a melancholy

adieu—he received—no matter——Harwich, and its port, and its packets, and its *contretemps*, were many miles in his rear, forgotten, abandoned, before he had read six lines of the despatch, which love itself had worded in all the glow of sympathy and enthusiasm—and which evinced, that however a man may ride the high horse, and vow and swear to the right hand and left—he is the mere creature of circumstance—a weather-cock influenced by every change of wind—and that he has but one fast-hold against the misgivings of despair—hands clean enough to lift up before the footstool of Heaven—and a conscience clear enough to appeal for its support.

Percy forgot not to whom the first thanksgiving was due—and the next—he bribed the post-boys, to enable him to pay in person, as rapidly as a man travelling without wings, or steam, could well devise.

How Lord Harweden déported himself—or, rather, how he felt, upon the restoration of a son, and that, too, a son beloved, and endeared to him from the cradle—how Lady Louisa, who would have united her fate to that of Percy, when she

thought him, in all but his own person and deserts, the most forlorn and pitiable of human beings—how Percy himself, finding within his grasp all that could endear or embellish life—how each felt, and expressed the overflowings of the heart, need not be described to be understood—nor could it be described, so as to be understood, by any whose own hearts failed to catch, and imbibe it, at the first glance.

It may be readily conjectured, that where such a concurrence of sentiment and feeling combined to bring matters to an issue, so long rendered the first object of existence to the several parties—as little delay as possible was permitted to interfere with the final arrangement, and union of the long lost and late found Lord Brandon, with the early object of all his hopes and dreams—his fair cousin and adored companion, Louisa Clarendon.

If the fastidious critic—and there are few of the tribe who are not so—should, in his scepticism, touching the truth of our narrative, urge the improbability of the facts—we have only to assure him, that *the most improbable of these events*

have their foundation in plain matter of fact—and that there are readers who will, without owning it, perhaps, acknowledge this to themselves, and acquit the author even of exaggeration in the mode of recording them.

"Le vrai ne'st pas toujours le vraisemblable," and if it were, it would hardly be worth recording. —No man ventures on a story round the table, unless it has something to recommend it out of the common way—and if an unfortunate wight is caught in the act of reciting a "says he," and "says she," and "so," without some redeeming points of discursive fancy, he is for ever established as a PROSER!

Mrs Rycott, or, as she was called up to town to appear—the Countess of Harweden, although no conjuror, was somewhat of this sort of critic, for she declared, "It was the most unnatural thing in the world, for people to send all the way into Cumberland to steal children, when there were more in London—as she had been credibly informed—than they knew what to do with" —and when, with some difficulty, and not a little of the petulancy of impatience, on the part of her

liege lord, the circumstances connected with the several mysteries and involvements, were in some measure rendered intelligible to her, she only observed, that "There was not much in all this—for that she said, from the beginning, it would be hard, indeed, if, after all the expences of his education and bringing up, Percy should turn out to be no child of hers;" adding, "But you, Mr Rycott—Lord Harweden I mean—were always so positive, there was no beating any thing into you."

"No, Madam—nor any thing, by Jove ——"

But his Lordship was checked—or rather silenced, by the Lady's immediate resumption of her "knotting"—and it is time for thee, thou fairest of my fair readers, to follow so notable an example, if thou hast neglected thy work, on my account—since, to my sorrow be it spoken, I am compelled to make my bow—wishing thee, at parting, whatever thou mayst wish most—in the full and firm conviction, that the purity of thy mind is equal to the beauty of thy person—and that thou canst wish for nothing, that angels

might not smile in granting. — What can I more?—and canst thou find in thy heart to abuse me or my story after this?—Impossible!—Fare thee well!

THE END.

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